

Slapstick

The Magazine Dedicated to the
Appreciation, Documentation &
Preservation of Early Film Comedy

**Jimmie
Adams**

Eddie

LeVeque

Mabel

Normand

Marie

Mosquini!

Ben

Turpin

and more



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Welcome to our ninth issue of Slapstick!
My thanks to all of those who made this number possible.
Hope you enjoy this one and will be back for the tenth in July 2004.
Your comments and suggestions are always welcome
and we look forward to hearing from you.

Slapstick!

WELCOME

Handwritten in red ink:
H. R. Rydzewski
Silly bout
the delay!
Steve

Right on the heels of last year's successful Slapstick II, Be sure to get on Dave Stevenson's announcement for Slapstick II. Be sure to get on Dave Stevenson's email list for up-to-the-minute updates!

JOIN US IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS - JULY 8TH - 11TH, 2004

EDITOR'S NOTE

By Dave Stevenson, Slapstick II Organizer

I hope this first issue of the Slapstick II monthly e-newsletter finds you conscious and I hope that you, in turn, find it useful. Over the next few months I'll try to keep these updates coming on a regular basis. There will always be something new to add, I'm sure. Much of what you will find below in this edition may not be new to you, but have a look at it anyway. It beats deleting all that spam you just got.

For those of you bringing wives, husbands, families and/or mistresses and gigolos to Slapstick II, I will always include links to Boston's tourist sites and visitor information. Similarly, I will post links to the hotel and film venues when all of those details are firmed up.

SPECIAL GUEST STAR: JEAN DARLING

As you are all aware, we will be joined at Slapstick II by former Our Gang member, Jean Darling. Her vivid memories of the Hal Roach Studios and of Hollywood in the silent and early sound era will, no doubt, add a tangible link to some of the other folks on the screen. In addition to her work in film, Jean had a very successful career on Broadway. She appeared in 850 consecutive performances of *Carousel* during its original NY run. She was a familiar face on early American television. She is still recognized in the streets of Dublin (her current home) as Irish television's beloved "Auntie Poppy." If you're a student of music history ask her about Richard Rogers. If you like all things cowboy, quiz her on Gene Autry. If you're a World War II buff, ask her about her distinguished service record with the USO. By all means, however, please ask her about her experiences with the Roach Studios. Jean has just published the second edition of her book *A Peek At The Past* and you can view her website here: <http://indigo.ie/~jdarling/> If you're thinking of buying a copy of her book, she sells them personally autographed on ebay for just \$24.99.

OUR VENUES

I had hoped to announce the cinema venues with this first issue of the Slapstick II e-newsletter, however, due to some recent (very positive) developments I'm going to hold off saying anything at all for the moment. We have been considering the Newton Holiday Inn as our home base owing to its proximity to both potential halls and public transportation, but that could change as the cinema venue situation unfolds. More on that as things develop. As soon as I have the facilities locked down I will share the info with you. Until then I'm keeping it on the quiet, as Oliver Hardy would say.

35 mm FILM PROGRAM

There are several irons in the fire at this time in an effort to procure a top notch 35mm show for Slapstick II. Rest assured, we will present another solid program of silent comedy shorts. We are hoping to inter-

16 mm FILM PROGRAM

est a variety of national and international sources in our efforts. Big thanks at the outset to Steve Massa, Cole Johnson, Rob Farr and Serge Bromberg for ready assistance.

A few titles have been nailed down for the 16mm program and offers continue to pour in amounting to something of an embarrassment of riches. As related in a previous email we will be presenting segments showcasing the talents of Larry Semon, Snub Pollard, Our Gang, Frank "Fatty" Alexander, a certain chimp and her ever-present collection of houseflies & another latent Christy extravaganza. The usual suspects like Messrs Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd, Laurel and Hardy will also be represented. As we get closer to July I am certain that we will have been thorough several versions of the 16mm program, but the final result will be a real gem. We are aiming for the funniest, the most obscure and the best (print) quality titles that we can lay our hands upon. We have a lot yet to do. Here are a few films being considered that may whet your appetites:

Mighty Like A Moose, Roach-Pathe; (7-18-26); 2R;
Charley Chase, Vivian Oakland (stunning Kodascope)
Mama Behave, Roach-Pathe; (2-26-26); 2R;

Charley Chase, Vivian Oakland

The Fall Guy, Vitagraph; (7-10-21);

Larry Semon, Oliver Hardy, Frank Alexander

Dizzy Sighs, Christie-Paramount; (12-7-27);

Billy Dooley, Vera Steadman

Where Am I?, Roach-Pathe; (4-1-23); 2R;

Snub Pollard, Marie Mosquini

The Mystery Man, Roach-Pathe; (8-19-23); 2R;

Snub Pollard, Marie Mosquini

A Trail of Trouble, Chester-Educational; (10-3-20); 2R;

Snooky the Humanzee

Four Times Foiled, Chester-Educational; (6-20-20); 2R;

Snooky the Humanzee, Edgar Kennedy

The Scholar, King Bee; (4-1-18); 2R;

Billy West, Oliver Hardy

A great many titles will follow as we have only just begun talking to the numerous collectors who have been gracious enough to volunteer their films and their efforts. As stated last time, every effort is being made to locate and obtain another fine program of Fox Comedies. Thank you all for your input and efforts - please keep them coming!

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

As some of our most obscure material may come to us in the form of video, we will be offering some film titles via video-projection. In order to do this properly, we would like to utilize the best quality video material available. While the vast majority of our films will be presented in film format, we will do wish to take advantage of showing some very obscure titles via video. If you would like to contribute to this portion of the program, please contact me at: slapstick_comedy@earthlink.net

BTW: Any format, i.e. VHS, PAL etc. will be fine.

SLAPSTICK SUMMIT

At Slapstick II we will hold another edition of the Slapstick Summit. This time, however, with a significant format difference. The films will be shown in groups of approximately one-and-a-half hours. Each group

will be presented by one of our specially selected silent comedy big brains who will pontificate (hopefully not endlessly) on his or her chosen topic prior to the actual running of the films. At the end of the weekend, all of our experts will be called back in front of the audience as a group for closing thoughts and questions. There will also be brief programs of authentic theater advertising, presented in 35mm slide format, such as glass slides, advertising cuts, stills, lobbyes, etc. with recorded musical accompaniment presented between the common-

MUSICAL ACCOMPANISTS

We will be joined for Slapstick II by the very able Ben Model at the keyboard. Ben put in yeoman's hours during Slap I with very positive results from the audience. We look forward to bringing him up to Boston. Again, because of developing circumstances, I am unable to disclose precisely what we will be able to offer, but, if everything works out for the best, we will have a truly outstanding musical program to accompany our silent comedies.

INTERMISSION MUSIC

Intermission music will be played from CD recordings of early electric 78 rpm. Many of the tunes on the CDs have been taken from the collection of comedienne Thelma Todd's uncle, Alec Raymond. The recordings have been transferred painstakingly from the original 78s with surface noise largely removed via digital technology. These recordings include a great many rarities from long dead labels like Madison, VanDyke and Clarion. I realize that music played at intermissions will go largely unnoticed by the vast majority of attendees, but it's just one more detail to bring out the period culture. Some of the numbers feature theater organist Jesse Crawford "at the Mighty Wurlitzer." BTW: CDs will be available for sale with all proceeds to benefit Slapstick.

PROGRAMS

The Slapstick II programs will be printed on matte finish paper (glossy covers - we hope) with notes, release dates, cast lists and descriptions. You can send registration via PayPal to the aforementioned e-mail address.

REGISTRATION

Registration for Slapstick II is \$75 for the four day event before May 31st and \$85 after that date. Incremental registration paid at the door is \$25 per day. For further information please contact Dave Stevenson, 188 Seames Drive, Manchester, NH 03103 or e-mail to: slapstick_comedy@earthlink.net You can send registration via PayPal to the aforementioned e-mail address.

BOSTON LINKS...

Boston USA ~ official visitor's website: <http://www.bostonusa.com/>
 Massachusetts Tourist Information: <http://www.mass tourist.com/>
 GoCity Kids ~ Parents' Guide to Boston
<http://www.gocitykids.com/browse/subcat.jsp?area=194&category=882>
 Fenway Park ~ Home of the Red Sox - http://boston.redsox.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/bos/ballpark/bos_balpark_history.jsp
 Museum of Science: www.mos.org
 Freedom Trail: www.thefreedomtrail.org/

Many more will follow in the coming months. Be sure to get in touch

Beussel-Palast
 Bussel-Straße 22
 2. Etage

Dick und Dof
 in **Die Zeufelsbrüder**
 Eine sehr lustige Oper nach Frau Dorella
 Zwei Gläubigen haben eine Gabe.
 Dick und Dof werden helfen.



Freitag! Ihre Zotenonten!
 Fritz Kampers, Elisabeth Wendt
 in der Komposition

Kameraschiff
 Freitag! Ihre Zotenonten!
 Fritz Kampers, Elisabeth Wendt
 in der Komposition

With Dave for the latest info or drop us a line here at Slapstick

When the first (and, to date, only) German translation of William K. Everson's classic **THE FILMS OF LAUREL AND HARDY** was published in 1980, German editor Joe Hembus added a three-page list detailing many of the countless German adaptations of the Laurel & Hardy films, change for the local market. Despite the considerable length of the list, Hembus knew he had only scratched the surface, noting: "The following overview can only roughly sketch the history and method of these manipulations [of Laurel and Hardy films in Germany]; an exhaustive analysis would require extensive researches necessitating their own book. This detective story remains to be written."

Film historian Norbert Apling has at last written this story, based on years of in-depth research. Apling is a member of the international Laurel & Hardy preservation society 'The Sons of the Desert' and indeed belongs to two branches - or 'lenses' - each named after one of the team's films (in this instance the **TWO TARNS** and **THAT'S MY WIFE** lens). The book, provisionally titled "Das Dick-und-Duff-Buch. Die Geschichte von Laurel und Hardy in Deutschland" [The 'Dick & Duff-Book. The story of Laurel and Hardy in Germany] will be available in spring 2004, in the film book edition from Marburg publishing house Schüren. Apling's research includes official records of film censorship and certification. Using daily papers, trade journals, party-affiliated and faith-based review publications, he reconstructs how the two comedians' work has been received in Germany down the years and analyzes the marketing activities within German distribution of the team's films, from

JIMMIE ADAMS

By Tommie Hicks, Jr.



There are many silent film comedians unjustly forgotten today. Jimmie Adams is a worse case of this.

Jimmie starred in two-reelers for ten years for major comedy studios and even had a respectable career as a supporting actor in features. He also wrote and directed comedies. He is every bit as funny as the comedians who occupy the second tier of silent film comedy. Hopefully, some more of his films will turn up and be exposed. Then maybe his obscurity will turn around and he can be rightfully regarded as second tier.

Jimmie was born James Brezus Adams, October 4, 1888 in Paterson, New Jersey, the same city that gave us comedians Lou Costello and Bert Wheeler.

Details of Jimmie's early days are hard to come by to say the least.

According to *The Motion Picture News* of 5/28/21, Jimmie entered show business circa 1908. According to M.P.N., he started out in minstrel shows and graduated to vaudeville and some legitimate theater. Whether this is true or Educational P.R. hyperbole, Jimmie did have enough show business "oomph" to be hired by Henry Lehrman for his *Sunshine* Comedies in 1917.

Jimmie's first known film appearance was in the inaugural *Sunshine* short *ROARING LIONS AND WEDDING BELLS* (11/11/1917). Since Henry Lehrman cared not for performer motion, we can still ascertain that Jimmie had major roles in these films. Not bad for a film comedian's first film series. While working for Lehrman, Jimmie crossed paths with a man who would greatly impact his career as well as the history of film comedy. His name was Jack White.

Jack White had the good fortune to grow up in Edendale, California just a few blocks from the Mack Sennett Studios. He and younger brother Jules worked at the Sennett Studios in various capacities as kids and teenagers. This is where Jack first crossed paths with Henry

Lehrman. When Lehrman started his comedy unit at Fox, he was impelled by his cheapness and egocentrism to hire young unknowns for very little money and Jack White was one (Norman Taurag was another). Along with Lehrman being the hardest taskmaster in silent film comedy, this produced an unexpected dynamic at *Sunshine* studios. These kids had nothing to lose and everything to prove. They made comedies that nearly eclipsed Sennett in popularity at the time.

As the Lehrman regime at Fox was imploding, Jimmie went to work for Century Comedies distributed by Universal. Lion comedies became all the rage in the late teens and Jimmie went to work as a star and writer. His films were directed by former *Sunshine* director Fred Fishback. Jimmie may have been writing and directing other Century stars at this time. There is a five month gap in his onscreen releases for Century. The 1922 short *GINGER FACE* that Jimmie wrote and directed, may have been made in 1919 and released later. By 1920 Lion comedies had run its course and Jimmie went to work for his former *Sunshine* director, Jack White. Before Jimmie did this, he played a supporting role in his first feature film *KISMET* (1920). With this role Jimmie started his respectable career in feature films as a supporting actor. Another man who had a supporting role in this movie, Sid Smith, would eventually become a professional associate of Jimmie and one of his best friends.

Henry Lehrman was added with the ability to alienate all the good help he had. Jack White was no exception. Jack formed his own new distribution arm of Educational Studios. The first two comedians he hired were Lloyd Hamilton and Jimmie Adams. Ham and Jimmie had so many career and personal parallels, it is almost uncanny.

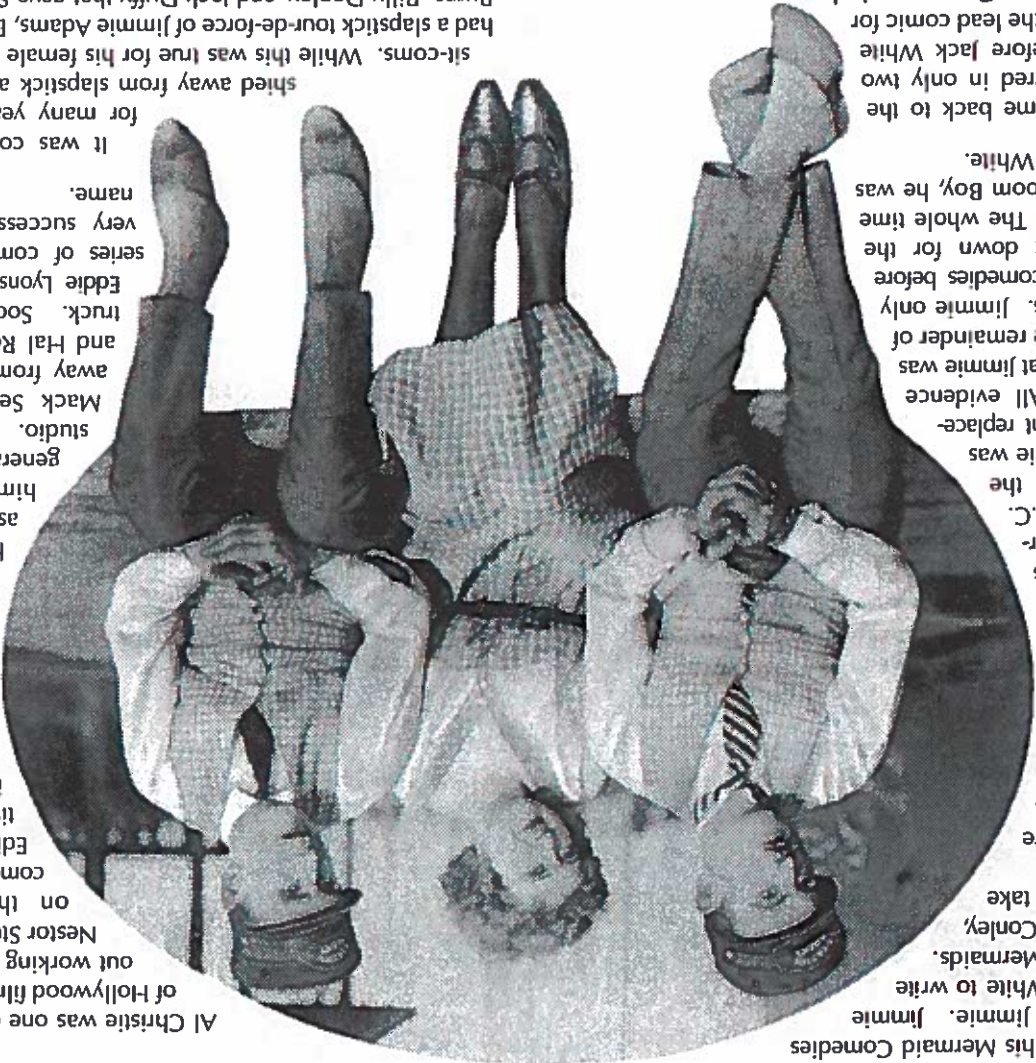
Jack White learned from Lehrman that trying to get more than six two-reelers a year out of a comic was unproductive. He split the



release schedule of his Mermaid Comedies between Ham and Jimmie. Jimmie was also hired by White to write scenarios for the Mermaids. Jimmie's co-star, Lige Conley, would eventually take over the series.

The Mermaids were a tremendous hit. But strangely enough, with White's consent, Jimmie was signed by C.B.C. films to take the place of Harry McCoy in the popular Hallroom Boys series that also starred Sid Smith. C.B.C. press releases give the impression that Jimmie was to be the permanent replacement for McCoy. All evidence seems to indicate that Jimmie was only to fill in for the remainder of that season's releases. Jimmie only appeared in eight comedies before the unit was shut down for the summer to re-tool. The whole time Jimmie was a Hallroom Boy, he was still writing for Jack White.

When Jimmie came back to the White unit, he starred in only two more Mermaids before Jack White assigned him to be the lead comic for his new Cameo series. Cameo was Jack White's one-reel brand. The Cameos were advertised as the "clean" alternative to most crude one-reelers being put out at the time. While making the Cameos, Jimmie was reunited with his Century director Fred Fishback, who by now had changed his last name to Hilbard due to his involvement in the Arbuckle scandal. What Jimmie's reaction was to being demoted to a one-reel star can only be speculated. Jimmie only made eleven of these Cameos before he took the opportunity to work for Al Christie in late 1922.



Al Christie was one of the true pioneers of Hollywood filmmaking. Al started out working for David Horsley's Nestor Studios in New Jersey on the Mutt and Jeff comedies. When Thomas Edison's patent detectives started breathing down Horsley's neck, he packed up the company and relocated in the southern California orchard community of Hollywood. Al went with him. Al, or "Al E." as his friends called him, shortly became general manager of the studio. This was in 1911. Mack Sennell was a year away from forming Keystone and Hal Roach was driving a truck. Soon Al was directing Eddie Lyons & Lee Moran in a series of comedies which were very successful and made his name.

It was conventional wisdom for many years that Al Christie shied away from slapstick and made only nice sit-coms. While this was true for his female comedians, Christie had a slapstick tour-de-force of Jimmie Adams, Bobby Vernon, Neal Burns, Billy Dooley, and Jack Duffy that gave Sennell and Roach a real run for their money. By 1920 the Educational Film Exchanges had evolved into formidable entity to distribute Christie's films.

Another aspect of the Christie Studios that made them so successful was the stock company that Christie hired. These folks, like the With support like Billy Engle, Bill Blaisdell, William Irving, Jack Duffy, Eddie Baker, Blanche Payson, and Anita Garvin, it was hard

It was also around this time Jimmie co-starred with William Boyd in a non-Christie P.D.C. feature *HER MAN O' WAR* (1926). This film was Jimmie's high watermark professionally as a supporting actor. Unfortunately, Jimmie would never get another plum role like this in a feature film.

BEAUTY A LA MUD (1926) is a delightful film where Jimmie masquerades as a French hairdresser to see his girl. Her father (Billy Engle) is the proprietor of a beauty salon who, as in a lot of Adams comedies, plays a father who always seems to have homicidal tendencies toward Jimmie. Halfway in the film Jimmie, in his disguise as a hairdresser, has to remove some hairy warts from Blanche Payson's face. The truly hideous warts are shown in all their glory, which was rare for a silent Christie short.

One of the best known of Jimmie's Christie-Educational was his last, *MEET THE FOLKS* (1927), once offered by Blackhawk Films. Adams plays a hypochondriac who returns home to find his family feuding with their neighbors. This film has many "hillbilly" gags, but the craftsmanship of this short makes them delightful. The "hillbilly feuding" scenes are some of the best in the sit-com corpus. There is a scene where a cross-eyed man has to shoot a bottle off of Jimmie's head. The camera shots used in this scene were years ahead of their time.

After completing *MEET THE FOLKS*, Christie changed his distribution from Educational to Paramount. Paramount by this time



Jimmie and friend in Paramount-Christie's Holy Mackerel.
Courtesy Cole Johnson



Jimmie in trouble again with Bill Blaisdell in one of his Christie comedies.
Courtesy Cole Johnson

to make a really bad short. Christie's directorial staff were no slouches either: Gilbert Pratt, William Watson, Scott Sidney, Harold Beaudine, and Robert Kerr were all veteran comedy directors when Christie hired Jimmie late in 1922.

When Jimmie went to work for Christie, he had a reputation with the critics as an "animal" or "disguise" comedian. The Fox and Universal "lion" comedies had by this time typecast him. His first short for Christie *GREEN AS GRASS* (1923), returns him to the animal comedian fold. In this film Jimmie acquires a horse that runs extremely fast when an umbrella opens, so enterprising Jimmie takes the horse and a gross of umbrellas to the racetrack. Jimmie went on to make around six two-reelers a year for Christie, and all were profitable and well received. If Jimmie worked behind the scenes in the writing department for Christie Studios it is not known. So much of Jimmie's life story has been lost due to his early death. Jimmie was also one of "Christie's Cursed Comedians." Only Neal Burns made it out of the thirties alive. Jimmie, Bobby Vernon, Billy Dooley, Jack Duffy, and Walter Heirs were all in the "bone orchard" before 1939.

When Al Christie started making features for P.D.C., all of the Christie comedians were used. Jimmie appeared in two Christie features, *HOLD YOUR BREATH* (1924) and *STOP FLIRTING* (1925).

directing there. His relationship with Virginia is yet another mystery even mention him in their obituaries let alone a write-up of his once famous film comedian. It is interesting to note the many similarities in Jimmie Adams and Lloyd Hamilton's life:

1. Both were hired by Henry Lehman for Fox Sunshine Comedies.
2. Both were hired by Jack White for his comedies.
3. Both sustained two-reel stardom for major studios for most of the 1920's.
4. Both wrote and directed comedies. Plus, they were both excellent "gag-men."
5. Both were fired by their studios in 1928.
6. Ham and Jimmie had reputations of enjoying alcohol too much.
7. Both wound up in bit parts for other people's films at the end of their careers.
8. Both died in their forties in the early 1930's.
9. Both were forgotten for decades.
10. Both have left behind comedies that are 90% funnier than today's film comedies. An excellent legacy!

The world may not be done with Jimmie Adams yet. More of his films are turning up, and if more folks can just SEE him, there is no reason why he cannot regain some of his former regard. He was an excellent comedian. All he needs is a chance to show you if you don't know it already.

I would not be able to complete this article without the copious assistance of Steve Massa.

Acknowledgements: Rob Farr, Sam Gill, Cole Johnson, Annette Lloyd, Madelyn Matz, Joe Moore, Brad Reeves, Richard Roberts, Wendy Roberts, Steve Rydzewski, and Brent Walker.

Please send all corrections and comments to

tommie25244@yahoo.com

JIMMIE ADAMS FILMOGRAPHY

All titles are two reels unless otherwise specified. Titles marked with an asterisk are known to exist whole or in part. The titles from 1917 to 1928 are silent. All titles 1929 and after are sound.

FOX SUNSHINE COMEDIES

ROARING LIONS AND WEDDING BELLS (1/11/1917) Screenplay: Henry Lehman, Director: William Campbell, Cast: Lloyd Hamilton, Mildred Lee, Jimmie Adams, Charley Dorety, Jack Richardson, Jess Weldon.

HUNGRY LIONS IN A HOSPITAL (2/3/1918) Screenplay: Henry Lehman, Cast: Lloyd Hamilton, Mildred Lee, Jimmie Adams, Tom Wilson, Ethel and Gene the Lions.

A WAITER'S WASTED LIFE (4/7/1918) Screenplay: Henry Lehman, Directors: Jack White and William Watson, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Eileen Percy, Lloyd Hamilton, Anita Burrell, Tom Kennedy.

from which he never recovered.

Jimmie made eight Christie - Paramount shorts to great reviews. One short that exists via Hollywood Enterprises (truncated narration), is LOVE SHY (1928). In this film Jimmie has to prevent his father (Billy Engle) from marrying a young gold-digger. The supporting cast in this short is so good they get as many laughs as Jimmie. There is a scene with Adams in drag being chased by crooks through the house. Jimmie dives through a large basket floral arrangement, rolling out of the dive wearing the must for a silent film comedian.

1928 would be a transitional year for Jimmie. He appeared in his last silent film, a feature for Fox, THE FARMERS DAUGHTER. He also finished his last two-reeler for Christie, SLIPPERY HEELS. For some reason, Al Christie decided not to renew the contract of his most profitable short reel comedian. Al Christie still released the comedies of Neal Burns, Bobby Vernon, and Jack Duffy for the 1928-1929 season. Why Jimmie was fired (as it appears to be), is a question I'm still researching. It is ironic that Lloyd Hamilton and Jimmie Adams were not asked to make their profitable shorts for their prospective studios in late 1928 and early 1929, the last season for silent film comedy. Also in 1928, Jimmie lost one of his best friends, Sid Smith. Sid died drinking fake booze at a 4th of July party at a beach in Santa Monica. Smith managed to crawl to a beach café and promptly died in the manager's office the next morning.

We don't hear from Jimmie for another year when he manages to land supporting roles for two Pathe features. The first, THE OFFICE SCANDAL (1929) was Jimmie's first appearance in a talking film. In second film, THE GRAND PARADE (1930), Jimmie appeared with other silent comedy stalwarts Russ Powell, Bud Jamison, and Jimmy Aubrey. Why Jimmie wasn't signed by a comedy studio at this time is a mystery. Not even Phil Ryan would hire him.

We don't see Jimmie again until 1931 when he starts appearing at Hal Roach Studios with Charlie Chase in HIGH C'S (1931). Jimmie was apparently working as a member of a musical quartet THE RANCH BOYS, who worked at various radio stations in Los Angeles. Chase and Jimmie must have met while both were working for Jack White at the Mermaid unit. Both men loved to sing and with their reported love for alcohol, they must have got along well. Although you see Jimmie singing with the quartet in Chase's films, Charlie gives him more to do in films like ONE OF THE SMITHS (1931), THE TABASCO KID (1932), and LUNCHEON AT TWELVE (1933). Despite Jimmie's well done appearances, you can sense something is wrong. In THE TABASCO KID, Jimmie looks like he's ten years older than he actually was.

On December 19, 1933, Jimmie Adams went to the Glendale Emergency Hospital an hour and twenty minutes later of Chronic Myocarditis. He was just 45 years old. The occupation listed on his death certificate was "Entertainer, Radio Broadcast," having worked at that occupation right up to the end. The death certificate stated that Jimmie was living at 9008 Wonderland Drive in Hollywood when he died. Jimmie's ex-wife, Virginia Warwick Adams was the informant of the certificate. Virginia was a supporting player in some Universal comedies and may have met Jimmie while he was

EDUCATIONAL

HIGH AND DRY* (1/1921) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Sid Smith, Frank Hayes

HOLY SMOKE* (2/27/1921) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Elinor Lynn, Lige Conley. (Also known as **HOTEL HYSTERIA**)

BANG! (3/27/1921) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Lige Conley, Jimmie Adams, Earl Montgomery, Otto Fries, Synopsis: Jimmie & Lige make their way out west and get into trouble with the locals.

SUNLESS SUNDAY* (7/31/1921) Produced and Directed by: Chuck Reisner, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lillian Biron, Cliff Bowes, Tom Kennedy, Frank Hayes, Synopsis: Jimmie is a reporter who helps Lillian's newspaper "put the lid" on the locals.

FREE AND EASY* (12/11/1921) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Elinor Lynn, Lige Conley, Otto Fries, Sunshine Hart

C.B.C. - FEDERATED FILM EXCHANGES

NOBODY'S BABY (1/6/1922) Director: Herman Raymaker, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: A reward is offered for a lost baby and Percy and Ferdie grab any baby they can to collect the reward.

FROM SOUP TO NUTS (1/23/1922) Director: Noel Mason Smith, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER (2/19/1929) Director: Herman Raymaker, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

BEWARE OF BLONDES (2/19/22) Director: Noel Mason Smith, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

GAME BIRDS (3/19/22) Director: Noel Mason Smith, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

THE DENTIST (3/24/1922) Director: Noel Mason Smith, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

BREAKING INTO JAIL (4/6/1922) Director: Noel Mason Smith, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

NO MONEY TO GUIDE HIM (5/25/1922) Director: Noel Mason Smith, Cast: Sid Smith, Jimmie Adams

UNIVERSAL

CINGER FACE (11/1/1922) Written and Directed by: Jimmie Adams, Cast: Johnny Fox, Synopsis: Johnny tries to blow up a lake with a bomb so he can get all the fish..

EDUCATIONAL

THE STEEPCHASER* (10/8/1922) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Lige Conley, Jimmie Adams, Elinor Lynn, Cliff Bowes, Sunshine Hart, Spencer Bell, Sam Lukkin

CRASH! (11/12/1922) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance, Synopsis: Jimmie and his family are newly homeless and take advantage of an opportunity to live on a "house-plane."

PITTER PATTER (11/26/1922) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance

RAINDROPS (12/2/1922) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Jimmie has to drive a bride to her wedding during a massive rainstorm.

A TIGHT SQUEEZE* (7/28/1918) Producer: Henry Lehman, Directors: Jack White, and William Watson, Cast: Lloyd Hamilton, Ethel Teare, Jimmie Adams, Charley Dorey, Tom Kennedy.

ROARING LIONS IN THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS* (9/22/1918) Director: Henry Lehman, Cast: Billie Ritchie, Lloyd Hamilton, Jimmie Adams, Hugh Fay, Monty Banks.

MONDRELS (11/10/1918) Producer: Henry Lehman, Director: Jack White, Cast: Lloyd Hamilton, Jimmie Adams

THE SON OF A HUN (12/19/1918) Producer: Henry Lehman, Director: Jack White, Cast: Lloyd Hamilton, Gertrude Selby, Jimmie Adams, Dave Morris.

HIS MUSICAL SNEEZE (2/23/1919) Producer: Henry Lehman, Director: Jack White, Cast: Lloyd Hamilton, Virginia Rappe, Jimmie Adams, Glen Caverder.

CENTURY - UNIVERSAL

A JUNGLE GENTLEMAN (4/10/1919) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Esther Wood, Charles Dudley, F. Robinson, Mrs. Joe Robinson

A VILLAGE VENUS (9/3/1919) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Edith Roberts

CHASING HER FUTURE (9/26/1919) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Edith Roberts, Synopsis: Jimmie matches wits against three anarchists known as "The Rebellion Brothers."

THE GOOD SHIP ROCKIN' RYE (12/15/1919) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams

WEAK KNEES AND WILD LIONS (12/22/1919) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lois Nelson

A BABY DOLL BANDIT (1/12/1920) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Edith Roberts, Joe Martin

OVER THE TRANSOM (2/9/1920) Director: Fred Fishback or William Campbell, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Esther Wood, Patrick Herman, Mrs. Joe Martin

A MOVIE HERO (8/30/1920) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Louise Fortune

EDUCATIONAL

A FRESH START* (7/20/1920) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lige Conley, Marvel Rea, Frank Coleman, Synopsis: Jimmie and Lige are newly released prisoners mistakenly believed to be fooling around with their former prison guards wife.

NONSENSE* (9/28/1920) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lige Conley, Marvel Rea, Frank Coleman, Hap Ward

WALDORF FILM CORPORATION

KISMET* (11/14/1920) 5 Reels, Director: Louis J. Gasner, Scenario: Charles C. Whitaker based on a play by Edward Knoblock, Cast: Hamilton Revelle, Otis Skinner, Herschell Mayall, Harry Lorraine, Paul Weigel, Otis Skinner, Rosemary Theby, Sidney (Sid) Smith, Elinor Fair, Mathilda Comon, Nicholas Dunae, Fred Lancaster, Leon Barry, Thomas (Tom) Kennedy, Sam Kaufman, Emmett C. King, Fanny Ferrari, Emily Seville, Georgia Woodhope, Robert Evans, Cornelia Skinner, James (Jimmie) Adams.

ONCE OVER (12/10/1922) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance

A GOOD SCOUT (12/31/1922) Produced and Directed by: Jack White, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Scoutmaster Jimmie takes his troop to Boy Scout camp.

OUCH! (1/7/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance

TEA 'N TEA (1/21/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance

BUMPS (2/4/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance

BROKE (3/4/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance, Synopsis: Jimmie is mistaken for a member of a gang and is thrown into jail, from which he attempts many escapes.

OH, SISTER (3/18/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance, Synopsis: Jimmie tries to prevent a "boarding house" gang from stealing his girlfriend's sister's money.

THE DUDE (4/15/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Hibbard, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance, Synopsis: Jimmie takes his girl to a barn dance.

TRAFFIC (4/29/1923) 1 Reel - Producer: Jack White, Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Virginia Vance

CHRISTIE - EDUCATIONAL

GREEN AS GRASS (4/8/1923) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Scott Sidney, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Chibiains the Horse, Synopsis: Jimmie finds out his horse will run fast when you open an umbrella, so Jimmie goes to the race track to enter the horse.

ROLL ALONG (5/20/1923) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Scott Sidney, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Babe London, William Irving, Blanche Payson

DONE IN OIL (10/14/1923) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Scott Sidney, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Babe London

BLACK AND BLUE (12/16/1923) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams

AGGRAVATING PAPA (2/10/1924) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Duane Thompson, George Pierce, Peter the Great the Dog, Synopsis: Jimmie gives his girlfriend's father poison by mistake and tries to rectify it without telling him.

SAFE AND SANE (4/16/1924) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Jimmie is a trouble shooter for a safe company and "robs" the wrong safe by mistake.

FAMOUS PLAYERS LASKY - PARAMOUNT

TRIUMPH (4/28/1924) 8 Reels, Produced and Directed by: Cecil B. DeMille, Story: May Eddington, Cast: Leatrice Joy, Rod La Roque, Charles Ogle, Sportswode Aiken, Zasu Pitts, Victor Varconi, Theodore Kosloff, Robert Edeson, Julia Faye, George Fawcett, Raymond Hatton, Alma Bennett, Jimmie Adams

EDUCATIONAL

NERVETONIC (5/18/1924) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Marie Astaire, Margaret Cullington,

CHRISTIE - EDUCATIONAL

SAVAGE LOVE (8/24/1924) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Scott Sidney, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Vera Steadman, Earl Rodney, Jimmie Harrison, Synopsis: Newlywed Jimmie is shanghaied by two friends and sent to a far away island and forced to portray a cannibal king. (Also known as SAVAGE LIGHTS)

WHY HURRY? (11/2/1924) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams

STEP FAST (1/18/1925) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams

LOVE GOOFY (3/22/1925) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Gilbert Pratt, Story: Robert Hall, Cast: Jimmie Adams, William Irving, Eddie Baker, Gus Leonard, Lincoln Plummer

CHRISTIE FILM CO. / PRODUCER'S DISTRIBUTING CORP.

STOP FURTING (3/30/1925) 6 Reels, Producer: Al Christie, Director: Scott Sidney, Story: Fred Jackson adapted by Joseph W. Farnham, Cast: John T. Murray, Wanda Hawley, Hallam Cooley, Vera Steadman, Jimmie Adams, Jack Duffy, Ethel Shannon, Jimmie Harrison, David James.

CHRISTIE - EDUCATIONAL

SIT TIGHT (5/31/1925) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Story: Frank Roland Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Jimmie races his car to win \$10,000 so he can get married.

BE CAREFUL (9/27/1925) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Jimmie helps a couple elope, but the groom is a wanted thief and Jimmie tries to foil the wedding for the girl's sake.

CENTURY - UNIVERSAL

AFRICAN LIONS AND AMERICAN BEAUTIES (11/5/1925) Director: Fred Fishback, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Esther Wood, The Century Lions (Note: This is probably a re-issue of one of Jimmie's Century Lion Comedies from 1919).

CHRISTIE - EDUCATIONAL

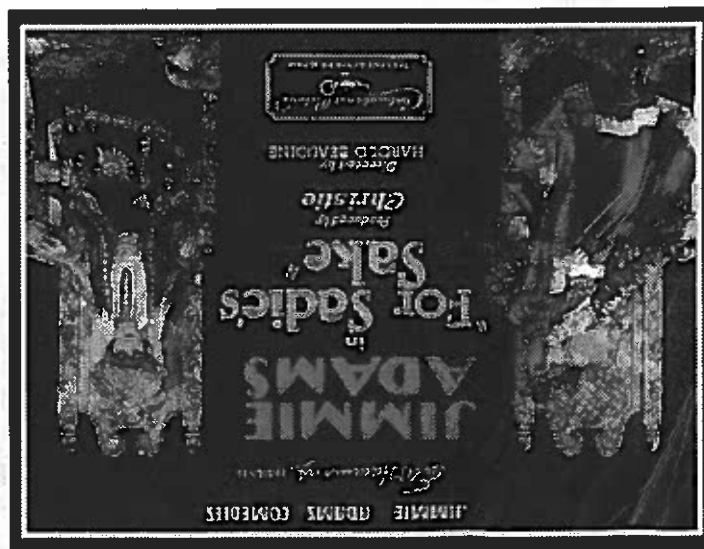
FOR SADIE'S SAKE (1/24/1926) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Story: Frank Roland Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Molly Malone, Eddie Baker, William Blaisdell, Anita Garvin. Synopsis: Jimmie and Molly take their kicking mule to town with disastrous results.

WHOA EMMA (3/14/1926) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Robert Thornby, Story: Frank Roland Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Molly

George Pierce, Jay Belasco Synopsis: Jimmie has a nervous breakdown and is treated in a beach fun house.

CHRISTIE FILM CO. / W.W. HODKINSON CORP.

HOLD YOUR BREATH (5/25/1924) 6 Reels, Producer: Al Christie, Director: Scott Sidney, Story: Frank Roland Conklin, Cast: Dorothy DeVore, Walter Hiers, Tully Marshall, Priscilla Bonner, Jimmie Adams, Jimmie Harrison, Lincoln Plummer, Max Davidson, Victor Rodman, Billy Blecher, Eddie Baker, Max Asher, George French, Irving Bacon



Malone, Hank Mann, Synopsis: Jimmie has completed a correspondence course as a ranch hand. He is assigned to capture the wild horse Wild Emma. While doing so the rustlers kidnap Jimmie's love interest and Jimmie and Emma bring the miscreants to justice.

GIMMIE STRENGTH (5/9/1926) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Story: Sid Herzig, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Molly Malone, William Irving, Eddie Baker, Kallia Pasha, Jack Duffy, Synopsis: News photographer Jimmie mixes up photos of a bank president with that of a burglar. He is then assumed to be an accomplice of the burglar and sent to a mental health facility where he attempts many escapes before he can prove his identity.

CHASE YOURSELF (6/27/1926) Producer: Al Christie, Director: William Watson, Story: Frank Roland Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Billy Engle, Bill Blaisdell, William Irving, Synopsis: Jimmie and his hobo buddies turn around a failing ranch and capture a band of rustlers.



HER MAN O' WAR (8/23/1926) 6 Reels, Producer: Cecil B. DeMille, Director: Frank Urson, Story: Frederick J. Jackson, Cast: William Boyd, Jimmie Adams, Jetta Goudal, Grace Darmond, Kay Deslys, Frank Reicher, Michael Vavitch, Robert Edeson, Junior Coughlin.

PRODUCER'S DISTRIBUTING CORPORATION

CHRISTIE - EDUCATIONAL

BEAUTY A LA MUD (8/29/1926) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Charlotte Merriam, Billy Engle, Blanche Rayson, William Irving, Dorothy Sebastian, Synopsis: Jimmie masquerades as a famous French hairdresser so he can woo his girlfriend behind her father's back.



SHELL SOCKED (10/31/1926) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Walter Graham, Story: Frank Roland Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Vera Steadman, Synopsis: WW 1 Doughboy Jimmie is ordered to get his girlfriend through enemy lines to her father, the General.

WILD AND WOOLY (1/2/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Story: Sid Herzig, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Jimmie takes his girlfriend and her father on a ride in his experimental airplane. The plane malfunctions and the group is marooned on an island inhabited by hostile cannibals.

BREAK AWAY (1/16/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Neal Burns, Natalie Joyce, Jack Duffy, Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Rival Eddie tries to keep this from happening up on time for a date. Rival Eddie tries to keep this from happening.

NO SPARKING (5/22/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Story: Hal Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Ann Christy, Bill Blaisdell, William Irving, Gus Leonard, Dorothy Vernon, Tiny Sanford

MEET THE FOLKS (7/10/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Robert Kerr, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Gayle Lloyd, Billy Engle, Patsy O'Byrne, Bill Blaisdell, Gus Leonard, Synopsis: Jimmie returns home for his health and finds out his family is feuding with the family of the girl he fell in love with on the train.

CHRISTIE - PARAMOUNT

DR. QUACK (8/27/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Robert Kerr, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Billy Engle

OH MUMMY (10/8/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lorraine Eddy, Billy Engle, Jack Henderson, Eddie Baker, Bud Ross

OCEAN BLUES (11/19/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Robert Kerr, Cast: Jimmie Adams

SWISS MOVEMENTS (12/31/1927) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Robert Kerr, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Doris Dawson, Billy Engle, William Irving.

Slaps!tack!

Be Sure to Tell a Friend
You Saw It In

R.R. Bowker, Co. 1971
The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in
the United States: Feature Films 1921-1930, Kenneth W. Munden,

Executive Editor, UCLA Press, 1988

The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in
the United States: Feature Films 1911-1920, Patricia King Hansen,

The Bruff Silent Short Working Papers - McFarland, 2002

The Great Movie Shorts by Leonard Malin - Bonanza Books, 1973

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Classic Images, November 1986, #137

Roberts (Unpublished)

Educational Films Filmography by Joe Moore, Rob Farr, and Richard

The Moving Picture World 1921-1928

The Motion Picture News Booking Guide

The Motion Picture News 1917-1929

SOURCES:

will.

LUNCHEON AT TWELVE (12/9/1933) Director: Charles Parrott, Cast:
Charley Chase, Betty Mack, Gale Henry, Billy Gilbert, James Barty,
Harry Bernard, Major Sam Harris, Jimmie Adams, Charley Hall, Billy
Frane, Synopsis: Charley becomes a house contractor against his

camping.

MIDSUMMER MUSH (10/21/1933) Director: Charles Parrott, Cast:
Charley Chase, Betty Mack, Eddie Baker, and The Ranch Boys with
Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Scoutmaster Charley takes the boys out

Charley Chase in First in War, Jimmie at center behind girl.
Courtesy Cole Johnson



and The Ranch Boys with Jimmie Adams

SHERMAN SAID IT (9/2/1933) Director: Charles Parrott, Cast:

Charley Chase, Nita Pike, Luis Alberni, Harry Bernard, Eddie Baker,

Jimmie Adams, Synopsis: Charley is held prisoner by an evil sultan.

Arabian Nights (6/3/1933) Director: Charles Parrott(?), Cast:

Charley Chase, Muriel Evans, Carlton Griffin, Rolfe Sedan, Eddie Baker,

Harry Schultz, Jerry Bergen, Russ Powell, and The Ranch Boys with

parke, Marvin Hailey, Jimmie Adams

Chase, Luis Alberni, Carlton Griffin, Nancy Torres, Billy Gilbert, Eddie

FIRST IN WAR (5/28/32) Director: Warren Doane, Cast: Charley

bandit "The Tabasco Kid" and a case of mistaken identity ensues.

Adams, Synopsis: Charley bears a remarkable resemblance to Mexican

Leo Willis, Marvin Hailey, Frank Cage, and The Ranch Boys with Jimmie

Charley Chase, Frances Lee, Billy Gilbert, Wilfred Lucas, Julian Rivero,

THE TABASCO KID (1/30/32) Director: James W. Home, Cast:

has to "go up in the hills" to collect on some instruments.

Eddie Baker, Jimmie Adams, Harry Bernard, Synopsis: Bill collector Charley

Charley Chase, James Finlayson, Louise Carver, Leo Willis, Harry Bowen,

ONE OF THE SMITHS (5/23/1931) Director: James Parrott, Cast:

home on a troop ship and just can't help breaking out into song.

Adams, Synopsis: Doughboy Charley and his buddies are returning

Bernard, Charlie Hall, Jerry Mandy, and The Ranch Boys with Jimmie

Charley Chase, Thelma Todd, Carlton Griffin, Frank Brownlee, Harry

ROUGH SEAS (4/25/1931) 3 Reels Director: Jimmie Parrott, Cast:

Synopsis: Doughboy Charley sings his way through WWI.

Schultz, Lucien Percival, and The Ranch Boys with Jimmie Adams,

Charley Chase, Thelma Todd, Carlton Griffin, Oscar Smith, Harry

HIGH C'S (12/27/1930) 3 Reels, Director: James W. Home, Cast:

HAL ROACH - M.G.M.

O'Donnell, Jimmy Aubrey, Bud Jamison

Sam Blum, Tom Malone, Russ Powell, Jimmie Adams, Spec

Twelve, Fred Scott, Richard Carle, Marie Astaire, Lillian Leighon,

Edmund Goulding, Directors: Fred Newmeyer, Cast: Helen

THE GRAND PARADE (2/2/1930) 8 Reels, Produced and written by:

Margaret Livingston, Jimmie Adams, Jimmie Aldine, Dan Wohlheim,

Jungmeyer, Cast: Leslie Fenton, Phyllis Haver, Raymond Hatten,

talking sequences, Director: Paul Stein, Story: Paul Gangelin, Jack

THE OFFICE SCANDAL (3/3/1929) 7 Reels, Silent with Photophone

PATHE

Jimmie Adams, Lincoln Steadman, Charles Middleton

Harry Brand, Cast: Frank Albertson, Marjorie Beebe, Arthur Stone,

Rosson and Norman Taurag, Story: Lou Breslow, Henry M. Johnson,

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER (10/14/1928) 6 Reels Director: Arthur

FOX

Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams

SLIPPERY HEELS (6/16/1928) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold

Eddy, Billy Engle, Eddie Baker, Curtis McHenry, Buddy the Dog

Harold Beaudine, Story: Sid Herzig, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lorraine

GOOFY GHOSTS* (4/28/1928) Producer: Al Christie, Director:

prevent his father from marrying a young gold-digger.

Billy Engle, Eddie Baker, Buddy the Dog, Synopsis: Jimmie tries to

Beaudine, Story: Hal Conklin, Cast: Jimmie Adams, Lorraine Eddy,

LOVE SHY* (3/24/1928) Producer: Al Christie, Director: Harold

Harold Beaudine, Cast: Jimmie Adams

HOLY MACKEREL (2/11/1928) Producer: Al Christie, Director:

From the Semon Family Album

By Claudia Sassen

Jacob Semon (1838-1923)

Jacob Semon, Larry's uncle, was born in Richmond, Virginia. During the Civil War he served as a private messenger for Jefferson Davis and later was in charge of the telegraph system of Virginia. Jacob bore a close resemblance to John Wilkes Booth, the slayer of Lincoln. In 1865, shortly after Lincoln's assassination, Jacob moved to Philadelphia. Soon after his arrival, he was taken as a suspect and roughly handled by a mob. He was identified by newspaper men and released. Jacob became a well known figure in the city and his tobacco store was a rendezvous for many prominent men. After selling in Philadelphia, Jacob married Anna Bailey, who died a year later. Some years afterwards, he married the daughter of Thomas Jackson, a well-known newspaper man.²³

Jacob's and Larry's relationship was a cordial one. Before getting married, Larry lived with Uncle Jacob and worked as an engraver. The two stayed in contact until Jacob died in 1923 at the age of 85.¹⁸

Zera Semon (1847-1901)

Larry's father, Zenuabel "Zera" Semon, also known as Professor Zera, was a native of Charlottesville, Virginia. He was a travelling ventriloquist and magician of high order. In the pursuit of his calling, which for many years was a very lucrative one, Zera had practically encircled the globe. He was more widely known in the Dominion of Canada, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. Reportedly, his popularity equalled that of the best performers in the United States. This favor came not only from his magic skill, but was intensified by his unstinted generosity in aiding people in need. In several mine disasters in Canada and elsewhere, he gave liberally of his money and always showed sympathy for the working classes. One year before his death, in 1900, he devoted the entire proceeds of a crowded house to the Transvaal War Fund. But for constant acts of charity he would have accumulated a large fortune. As it was, he died poor at the home of a sister in Philadelphia, April 1901.

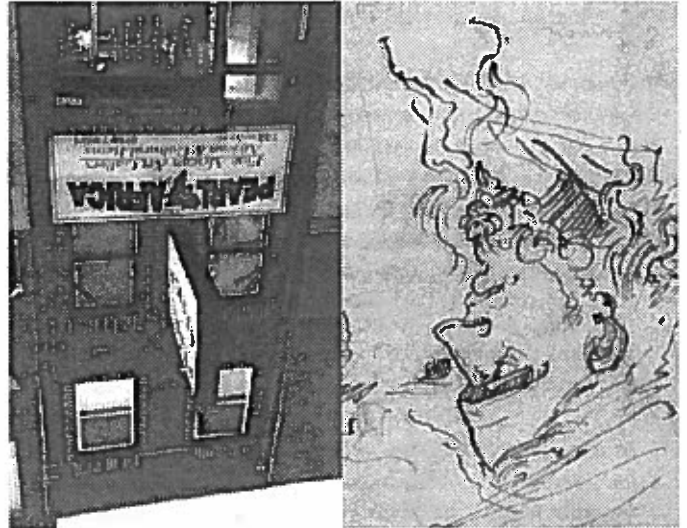
In 1918, Zera's manager recalled that Zera always won the sympathy of the audience because he was handicapped – one leg being shorter than the other. When asked of Zera's wife, whose name remains obscure, he states:

"I thought he was under my management but soon found out that I was under his wife's management. She was an attractive woman and ruled the roost a great vigor, and the way in which she bossed the outfit was a dream in generalship. And say, that girl could cuss and swear to make your soul rejoice. I have never heard her equal among

Quite often have I been asked for genealogical details of silent screen comedian Larry Semon and his ancestors. Nothing seemed to be known about his family. In the end, it seems that more information is available about Larry's forebears than about himself: we neither know his exact date of birth nor do we know his real date of death. Now that we have some interesting stories of Larry's relatives at our disposal, let me walk you up one branch of the Semon family tree, up to his most recent offsprings.

Emanuel Semon (1798-1871)

Larry Semon belonged to a family of celebrities. Larry's grandfather Emanuel Semon is said to have been born in Amsterdam or to be a native of Germany. Emanuel emigrated to the United States in the first third of the 19th century and made Richmond, Virginia his home. He became one of the most prominent Masons in that state, and Tyler of the Grand Lodge of Virginia for a period of twenty-five years. Jewish Emanuel and his wife, the Quakeress Mary Bailey, had 16 children many of which lived well into their seventies. A photographic portrait that had been taken during the Civil War suggests that Emanuel was a good-looking, vibrant man with fair hair and water-blue eyes. Unfortunately, publication copyrights of the photograph could not be clarified in time for this article.



Recently for sale on ebay, Emanuel Semon drew this portrait in 1820. For decades it was part of a European collection. Emanuel could be identified through his signature which was compared to manuscripts whose author was known to be Larry's grandfather. Right, the present owner of Emanuel's old home on South Street in Philadelphia. From the collection of the author.

A portrait of Zera Semon, the magician, ca. 1880, and his last place of residence, the home of his sister, Mrs. Rebecca (Semon) Bowman, at Berks Street in Philadelphia.



the male sex in constant and competent cussing." Zera's interests were not restricted to the stage, but also stretched to cartooning, and to business in the fish industry somewhere in Halifax. Zera also aided in one of the first film productions, that of Lois Fuller doing a serpentine dance. Zera saw a great future in the film industry and advised his son Larry to study motion pictures. According to obituaries, Zera died of Bright's Disease, which was aggravated by the shock of being caught at sea during a cyclone that devastated Galveston.

Augusta Rosenbaum (1890-1960) and Larry

Augusta "Gusie" Rosenbaum was the granddaughter of the German-Austrian emigrants Nathan and Ethel Rosenbaum. It is not known where Larry and Augusta met, presumably it was in the Jewish circles of Philadelphia, if not at The Young Men & Young Women's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia which had its headquarters at 1616 Master Street. Here Larry got his start in amateur dramatic productions. Augusta and Larry married in 1909 at the home of Augusta's parents. Three years later, their only daughter Virginia "Gigi" was born. It may very well be that Larry, who revered Zera, named his daughter for the home state of his father. Larry's young life had not been an easy one. He had spent more than 13 years on tour with Zera's travelling show. When both of his parents died at nearly the same time he had to struggle making a living with odd jobs. The Philadelphia Directory of 1902 for example lists him as a clerk. After graduating from high school, Larry started as a general handy man on the North American, one of the most renowned newspapers of the nation, and later contributed illustrations and articles to their Sunday supplements. With his marriage to Augusta, Larry's life did not necessarily change for the better. Now he was faced with the Rosenbaum family clan, who made a definite claim for being upper-class and for this reason looked down on Larry. Everybody thought he was not good enough for Augusta, because he was an artist and not a scientist or a doctor. The Rosenbaum family was proud of having brought forward Philadelphia's first radiologist, George Rosenbaum, who had studied the science in Germany, probably under the tutelage of Wilhelm Roentgen, discoverer of the

Larry and his first wife Augusta Rosenbaum. Behind Augusta her brother, George Rosenbaum, Philadelphia's first radiologist. By courtesy of Joan Berschler.



X-rays. A family photo has survived that shows Larry together with his new family. With its detached attitude in mind, it is not surprising that the Rosenbaums did not group around Larry, but rather shifted him off to the margin of the picture. Larry was definitely not integrated. An illustrator at the time of Virginia's birth, Larry rose to first stardom when landing a job on the metropolitan papers in New York. He was about becoming one of the most popular sports journalists and cartoonists in the country. But the Rosenbaums did not approve. Nor did Larry rise in their esteem when moving into pictures for which he eventually abandoned the newspaper business. Joan Berschler, a first cousin of Virginia and direct descendant of the Rosenbaum family, writes:

"I find this very interesting that we had a star in our midst and the family never seemed to care. In those days people in the entertainment business were not considered to be very trustworthy – which proved to be the case with my aunt and cousin (Augusta and Virginia). In our family unless you were college educated and headed toward a profession, you were considered to be worthless. This is certainly not the way life is today, since movie stars set the standard to which so many of our young people strive. I now recall my father's attitude toward movie stars, and how wrong I thought (as a teenager) that he was. Now I can understand where he was coming from."

The Vitagraph Film Company sent Larry from New York to Hollywood, about 1916, still a young and relatively impassable location for film productions and not yet so popular among filmmakers. Upon the Vitagraph rewarded Larry with calling him back to New York. Larry however, did not appreciate the New York location because he was near to Augusta, whose son-in-law once described her as being "always miserable."

When Hollywood began to grow, Larry's visits at the West Coast extended. He fell in love with Lucille Carlisle, a beauty queen from Spokane, Washington. She became his leading lady. His entanglement with Lucille made Larry break off communication with Augusta and Virginia, who had stayed back in New York, except for a fairly liberal allowance which he gradually cut down. After receiving

MOVIE STARS FORMER WIFE REWEDES

Mrs. Larry Semon, who was divorced from the comedian three years ago, was married to Henry M. Levy, a rich broker, of Houston, Texas, last Tuesday. The ceremony was in Houston. Following her divorce from the movie actor, Mrs. Semon made her home with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Rosenbaum, of 5714 Delancey Street. Members of Mrs. Levy's family and friends received telegrams from the bride yesterday announcing the marriage.



Newspaper article, 1923. Courtesy of Lynne Whitcopf

another one of those occasional checks that drifted along without any comment, Augusta had to find out the reason, packed up and accompanied with Virginia, she left for Hollywood.

Augusta had made the mistake of winning Larry beforehand that she was coming. So it turned out most difficult for Augusta and Virginia to meet him. Their attempts at getting access to the Vitagraph lot failed because Larry had instructed the gate keeper not to let them in. Phone calls remained unanswered or people would deny that Larry was around. In the end, Augusta learned of a noted attorney whose clients were from the film industry. He knew exactly of Larry's philandering and his infatuation for Lucille. The attorney had an important influence on Larry and so could arrange a meeting which must have been a shock because of Larry's cold-heartedness, in particular for Virginia.²² On their way back home to New York, Augusta and Virginia were involved in a very bad train wreck, but not seriously injured.

In 1919, Larry signed a contract with Vitagraph that guaranteed him \$3.6 million dollars for the next few years. This amount included his weekly salary of \$5000 and the budget for the production of his films. At the same time, Larry and Augusta divorced. Larry gave Augusta \$100,000 to stay out of his life for good. Some sources believe that Larry never saw the two again. According to Joan Berschler, Larry was shut out of the family. Augusta soon married well-off Henry Levy of Galveston, Texas and went through the money like water. Henry had a daughter with whom Virginia did not get along. Before long, Augusta and Henry divorced and Augusta and Virginia moved back to Philadelphia.

Virginia Bertha Semon (1912-1961)

Fate would have it that Augusta never forgot the looks of Larry as Virginia grew into his spitting image. Joan Berschler recalls that Virginia was one face with Larry. She looked like Larry dressed in women's clothes. She fondly speaks of Virginia as a very beautiful woman whom she adored.

"Virginia was ahead of her time, using make-up before others did and

Virginia as a child with an unidentified man (Henry Levy?), c1920



getting so beautifully dressed. She had wonderful teeth and lovely hands. She was a thin girl." Apart from her talent for drawing, Virginia had inherited some more qualities that are most reminiscent of contemporary descriptions of her father. Joan describes her as being "very funny - hysterical. When she entered a room, it lit up. She kept the party going. She loved people." Joan seems to remember Virginia dancing and that she had a generic interest in the stage.

Lynne Whitcopf, Virginia's daughter, adds:

"My mother was an attractive woman with dark brown hair and wonderfully expressive eyes and her father's large nose. She had an excellent fashion sense. She did have a great sense of humor and a quick wit. She was warm and charming and had many friends who found in her a loyalty and zest for living. She was a talented amateur painter. She also expressed this creative side with knitting and cross stitch embroidery. She was an avid reader and she and my father were



Virginia Semon, Larry Semon's daughter in 1929, aged 17.

Courtesy of Lynne Whitcopf

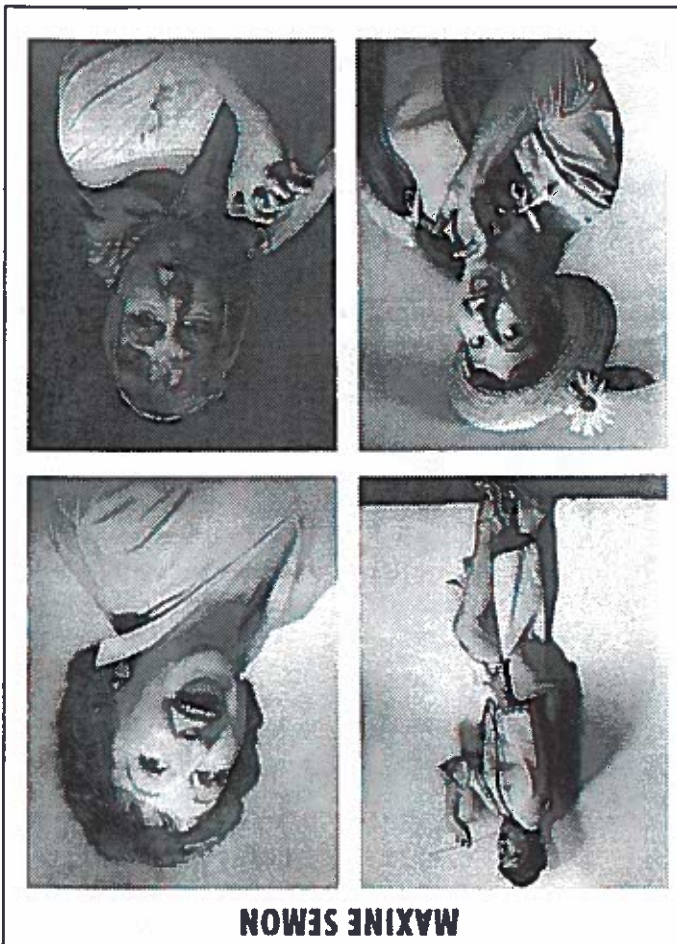
passionate attendees at plays and art exhibitions and concerts." In 1933, Virginia married dentist Dr. Reuben Matzkin. Although Reuben was highly educated, Augusta kept thinking that Virginia had married below her possibilities. After her marriage, Virginia became

Maxine was a comedian and had bit parts in B-grade Hollywood films such as Edgar Kennedy's *It's Your Turn* (1945). In this film, she is involved in a running gag with Edgar and his partner, who are heaving a washing machine up a stairway which is reminiscent of Laurel & Hardy's *Hals Off*. Maxine also did some "social work" in her later years, including a "made for television" one-half hour program, which was a dramatization – she played herself – of her efforts and success in rehabilitating a "street youth." Her true name was Maxine Davis. She took the name Semon, but probably not by marriage. Maxine was born in Baile Creek, Michigan, married at least twice and had one child who died in infancy. Her second husband was Drako Perlik, an inventor, who was killed in a light plane accident. Maxine

operated a Dancing School in Atlanta. Virginia's first cousin, Kay was, by the way, Groucho Marx's second wife. Whether Maxine Semon only claimed to be comedian Larry Semon's daughter can neither be confirmed nor denied. She was probably not the daughter of any woman he was married to. Otherwise, it would be feasible that Maxine, being well aware of her striking features, just cultivated her resemblance to Larry Semon for reasons of publicity. However, photographs make it difficult to believe that there was no genetic link. Larry Semon's daughter Virginia looks quite a bit like him, but so does – perhaps even more so – Maxine Semon.

Courtesy of Martin Lawrence "Larry" Semon.

Maxine Semon, who claimed to be Larry Semon's daughter, as photographed for a promotional flyer. Not many pictures have survived of Maxine. This photograph was found in the trash during a clean-up a few months ago.



MAXINE SEMON

Talking about the Semon family there is one person, who might be an unofficial member or a bogus one: Maxine Semon. By coincidence, information about her comes from another Larry Semon, who also lives in Atlanta and cannot locate the link to the comedian's family for himself. Larry was very well acquainted with Maxine. He is the son of Martin Lawrence Semon, Jr., whose sister was also a Virginia Semon. "Cina," as she was called, worked as an extra in numerous Hollywood movies. She was a dancer, as was her mother, Marie Hodgson, who was a professional ballerina, and Virginia owned and

Maxine Semon and another Larry Semon

Like her father, Virginia was a chain smoker. She had started at the age of 12 when living in Texas. She died at the premature age of 49 from lung cancer which had travelled to her brain. have survived.

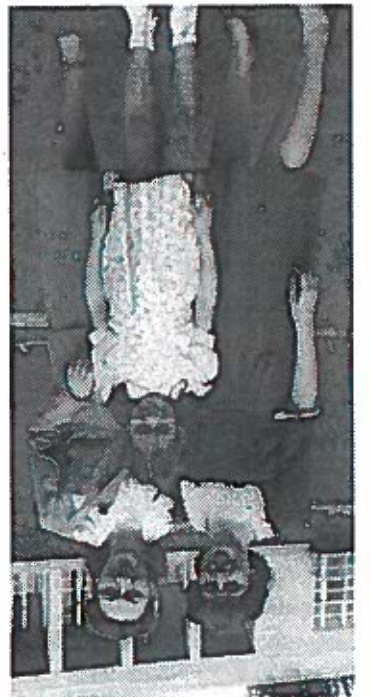
records of this interview seem to radio station in the 1950s. No on the occasion of an interview which she gave at a Philadelphia exception she would make was talking about her father. The only Virginia's only visible reaction was shrugging her shoulders. As Lucille. Learning about his death leaving Augusta for Lucille. have cared about her when as much as Larry did not seem to Virginia did not care about Larry in 1985.

in the summer of 2002 at the age of 94 years. He had only retired husband in Atlanta, Georgia. They have two children. Reuben died leaving a husband and three children. Today Lynne lives with her two children: Ruth and Lynne. Ruth died of breast cancer in 1969 Penn Fruit Company, a supermarket chain. Reuben and Virginia had a housewife. Prior to that she was an office worker or secretary for

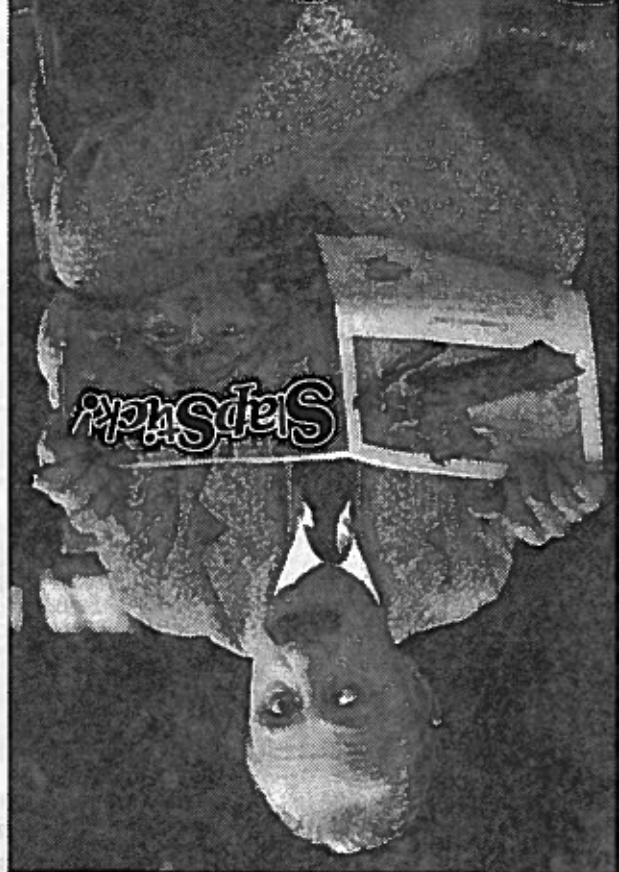
Courtesy Lynne Whilcorp.



Joan Berschler, Virginia Semon and Ruth in the early 1940s.



Slapstick!



KEEPING YOU UP
ON ALL THE LATEST
IN EARLY COMEDY!

Slapstick!



Courtesy of Lynne Whicopf and Sarah.

Below: Larry's offspring today. Dennis and their children Peter



Right: Joan Berschler on Oct. 14, 2000, the day she met with Steve Rydzewski to help with research for this article. She is carrying a parcel of goodies that contained many intriguing photos and documents.

Author's Collection

23: Jacob S. Semon veteran tobacco merchant dies from heart disease. Philadelphia Inquirer, 1923.

1995, <http://www.alex.org/Zines/ASCI/Taylorology/Taylor30.txt>.

22: Roberts, E. (1922). *The Sins of Hollywood: An Expose of Movie Vice*. Hollywood. See also Taylorology Newsletter, Issue 30 - June

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corrections.

And last not least, thanks to my husband Peter Kuehnlein for ingness and patience to share all kinds of information and pictures. Rydzewski, Larry Semon and Lynne Whicopf. Thanks for your will-

Acknowledgements

<http://lubbtsch.ill.uni-bielefeld.de/~csassen/Larrygallery/>

For further reading on Larry Semon, visit the website:

Semon died in around 1987. She was definitely not the daughter of Henry Levy, whose actual daughter was also named Maxine.

George Rowe / Marcel Perez / Alice Howell

– UPDATE –

by Steve Massa

New information on George Rowe, Alice Howell, and mystery man Marcel Perez, continues to trickle in. Much of it comes from SLAPSTICK! readers, so I'd like to thank our kind editor/publisher for the opportunity to post yet another update.

George Rowe:

New Rowe Sighting:

Recently news concerning a lobby card from *THE ONE BEST PET*, an 11/7/1920 Snooky the chimp short, was received from comedy fan and collector Jim Kerkhoff. On the lobby is a small cross-eyed comedian doing laundry, who, although the color tinting and retouching makes it difficult to be 100% sure, greatly resembles George Rowe. Since George pops up with Snooky two



George Rowe (or not George Rowe?) from "His One Best Pet." Courtesy Jim Kerkhoff

films later in *BEAT IT* (1/9/21), it's very possible that it's him on the lobby card and hopefully in the film too. Perhaps any SLAPSTICK! readers out there with access to *THE ONE BEST PET*, can take a look and let us know if they spot George anywhere.

New Title:

UNCENSORED MOVIES* (12/9/1923) PD: Hal Roach. Dist: Pathe. D: Roy Clements (uncredited Percy Pembroke & Rob Wagner). PH: Robert Doran & Otto Himm. Titles: H. M. Walker. C: Will Rogers, Marie Mosquini, Guinn "Big Boy" Williams, Noah Young, Earl Mohan, Ena Gregory, George Rowe, Billy Engle. 2 rs.

This title slipped through the cracks of my George Rowe filmography, and is, along with *TWO WAGONS, BOTH COVERED* and *BIG MOMENTS FROM LITTLE PICTURES* (both '24), one of Roger's famous spoofs of popular movie stars and genres. The plot of *UNCENSORED MOVIES* has will delivering a lecture about Hollywood to a small town audience where George is his projectionist, and includes Billy Engle & Earl Mohan (soon to be teamed as "Hunky Dorrey") sitting in the front row.

HIGH TIDE Screened:

In the last issue I mentioned that George's long thought lost starting short *HIGH TIDE* (3/19/1922) turned up on eBay in January '03 and was acquired by Lobster Films. Soon after that German film historian Norbert Aping found a version that was part of *Die Kleinen Strolche* – the German TV package of *The Mischief Makers*.

VOR KANNIBALEN WIRD GERWART begins with Our Gang footage from *YOUNG SHERLOCKS* ('22) that has Sunshine Sammy outside the bakery shop where baker George Rowe is replacing a gas pipe. Sammy gets a big dose of gas and stumbles in slow motion over to the gang's secret headquarters, and literally drops into the middle of their "secret society" meeting. A title card (in English) says – "Still in a daze... Sammy tells a story about his adventure in Africa." We then cut to *HIGH TIDE*, opening with natives dancing around a big stewpot. An odd looking one-man submarine walks up on shore, and George along with assistant Sammy get out prepared for a hunting trip. At the same time shipwrecked Ethel Broadhurst and her father Mark Jones wash up on shore, and are discovered by George who is going to rescue them as soon as he's finished hunting. While George and Sammy have misadventures hunting, Ethel and Mark are captured by the natives and put on the menu for lunch. After George stumbles into the culinary preparations, and gets

Marcel Perez:

While research has still not turned up an official date for Perez's death, new info has narrowed down the possible time frame for his demise and shed new light on his personal life.

Recently it's been confirmed that Perez was married to Dorothy Earle, the leading lady of his Reelcraft comedies, and that the couple had a child Marcel (Marty) Perez Jr., born on April 10, 1920. Available evidence suggests that Dorothy was his second wife as the wife he had in his first days in America and the shorts for the Eagle Film Company was named Babette. Whether Babette Perez was the same person as Nilde Babette (who appears to have been his Italian co-star Nilde Barracchi renamed and working in his Jester comedies) still needs to be sorted out, but by 1919 it looks like Babette is gone. At the same time Dorothy Earle appears in a lobby card for *CHICKEN IN TURKEY*, a 1919 Jester.

Dorothy was born Esther Lucille Elmendorf in New Jersey. As the Jesters were shot in Cliffside, New Jersey and the Reelcrafts in Yonkers, NY it's probable that the couple met, married and had Marcel Jr. on the East Coast. In fact Dorothy and Marcel Jr. returned there after Perez's death as they turn up in the 1930 U.S. Census living in New York City on West 109th street with her mother Josephine Elmendorf and aunt Glory. Dorothy is listed as Esther Perez, widowed, and working as a hotel hostess. Although one source gives her birthdate as 1892, on the census it says that she's 33, which would place her birth in 1897 or 1898. The latter seems more likely given her extreme youth in the Jester and Reelcraft comedies, and she lists her age at marriage at 20, which would then put it in the 1918 ballpark. In 1936 she married Harry Burton Comber de Mattos, had a second son Harry Roy Comber on July 20, 1939, and died on July 5, 1958 in Los Angeles. Marcel Earl Perez, who was ten at the time of the 1930 census, died on Jan. 17, 1996 in San Luis Obispo, Ca., at seventy-five years of age. At the moment it's unknown if he had

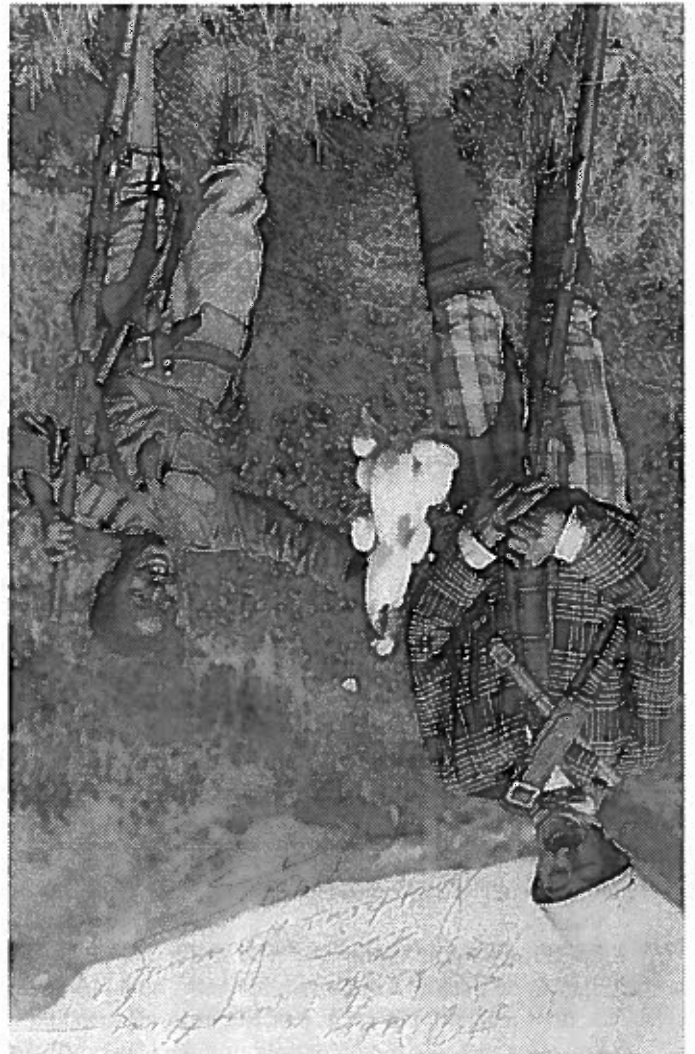


Scene from Tweedy's Reelcraft comedy, "Moving," with the help of Billy Gilbert and Dorothy Earle. Courtesy Cole Johnson

It's difficult and unfair to judge *HIGH TIDE* by this truncated version, without interludes and possibly missing footage, but a strong air of deadpan absurdity survives. The walking sub-marine is a living dadalist sculpture, and George as the star is just as goofy and goony as always. He's a totally unheroic hero, and it's his assistant Sammy who repeatedly saves his butt. Hopefully the complete version will eventually become available.

button for the episode. down for neglecting his chores, to provide the *SHERLOCKS*, where Sammy's mother tracks him Here we cut back to the ending of *YOUNG* carried into the surf under an arm. not enough room inside for Sammy, so he gets the escapees beat a path to the one-man sub there's one of the cannibal kids and saves the day. When put aside for dessert, Sammy switches places with

"High Tide." George Rowe and Sunshine Sammy Morrison in a pose from Courtesy Brent Walker



Dorothy, who was cute and vivacious in *SWEET DADDY* (21), gives a wooden performance and looks like her make-up was courtesy of Madame Tussauds. Dick Carter doesn't cut much of a heroic figure either, being slightly pudgy and wearing more lipstick than Dorothy.

There's also not much in the way of comic touches in the picture. Most of it consisting of a Pony Express station goof-off named "Fatty," who's told by our hero – "Say Fatty: them Putes is on the war path. If they get you, they'll fry the fat out of you." – and a Blanche Payson-type homesteader wife who bullies her little

The ending coda has our hero and heroine happily married and the parents of a little boy. Although seen briefly, the kid is the spilling image of Marcel Perez, and may possibly be Marcel Jr., who would have been five in 1925.

New Reelcraft Info:

More information and two new film titles have turned up for Perez's Reelcraft Mirth Comedies. Items from the trade magazines list Dorothy Earle, Sam Ryan, Tammany Young, Sam Lewis, and Billy Moran as making up the supporting casts for the series. Moran also functioned as assistant director, and H. Obrock was cameraman. Additional info from *Camera* and *Motion Picture News* state that Tweedy was also writing scenarios for another Reelcraft series, an "all star aggregation" called Humdinger Comedies.

As to the new titles in his starting series, the film I previously listed as "Unidentified Boxing Comedy" is *THE KNOCKOUT* a "burlesque on the Dempsey-Carpenter championship bout. In the burlesque 'Tweedy' will appear in Carpenter's role and will administer to the pseudo-Dempsey what he says he would like to have seen in real life." The other new title, which directly followed *THE KNOCKOUT*, is *MILK-MADE*. According to the 7/16/1921 *Motion Picture News* twenty-six Mirths were promised for release during the year, but it appears only eleven actually came out before Reelcraft expired. Here's an updated list of the Mirth Comedies, with an asterisk denoting the few known to exist:

HERE HE IS (5/16/1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle, Sam Ryan, Tammany Young, Billy Moran. 2 ris.

SWEET DADDY (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. PH: H. Obrock. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. Syn: Tweedy's suffragette wife keeps him locked up in the kitchen doing chores, but when she sends him out on an errand he runs free and hooks up with a chorus girl. 2 ris. (LOC, NFM).

CHICK, CHICK (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Productions. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. Syn: Tweedy goes to the country and visits his "rube" family. Country cousin Dorothy likes him, but can't make a hit with him until she goes to the city and returns in up-to-date attire. 2 ris.

VACATION (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez. 2 ris.

life, then he saves hers, and then they live happily ever after. Produced by Tom Mix's brother William, *PIONEERS OF THE WEST* is usually listed as a 1927 release but a review has turned up in the 9/19/1925 issue of the *Moving Picture World*. Since this was a states rights feature it's probable that it was leased and screened in different territories for a number of years. Perhaps due to the low budget the film is short on action and instead stresses the melodrama. Sadly the acting is pretty weak, and

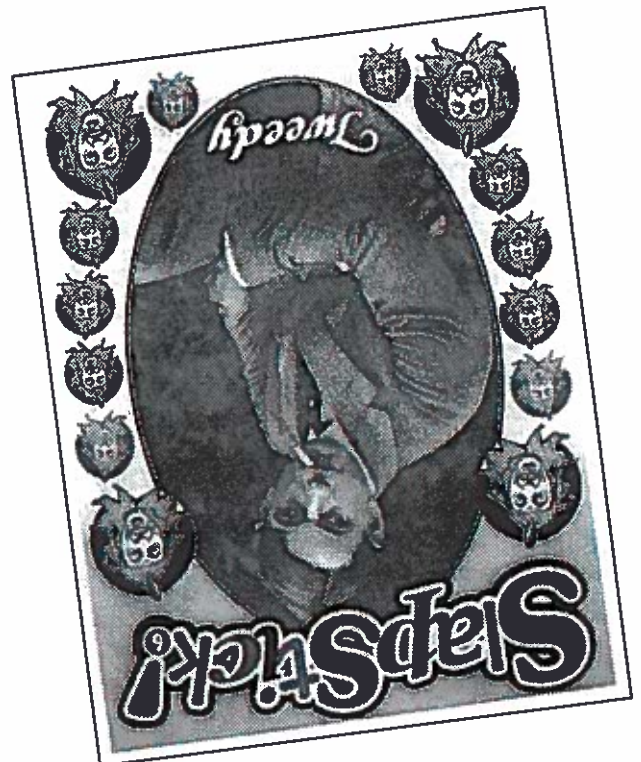
This no-frills little oater is definitely a family affair since Perez wrote the story and directed, while Dorothy Earle adapted the story and plays the female lead. Pretty much a soap opera in a Western setting, it's about Bright Feather (Dorothy), a white woman captured as a child and living with Indians. Desired by both the Indian chief and a renegade white man, who is the chief's second-in-command, Bright Feather is ordered to choose between the two. At this point "Pony Bob" (Dick Carter), a Pony Express rider, is captured by the tribe. Bright Feather saves his life, then he saves hers, and then they live happily ever after.

PIONEERS OF THE WEST (1925) PD: William Mix Prods. D& SC: Marcel Perez. Adapt: Dorothy Earle. PH: Elmer Dyer. C: Dick Carter, Dorothy Earle, Gene Crosby, Olin Francis, Bud Osborn. 5 ris.

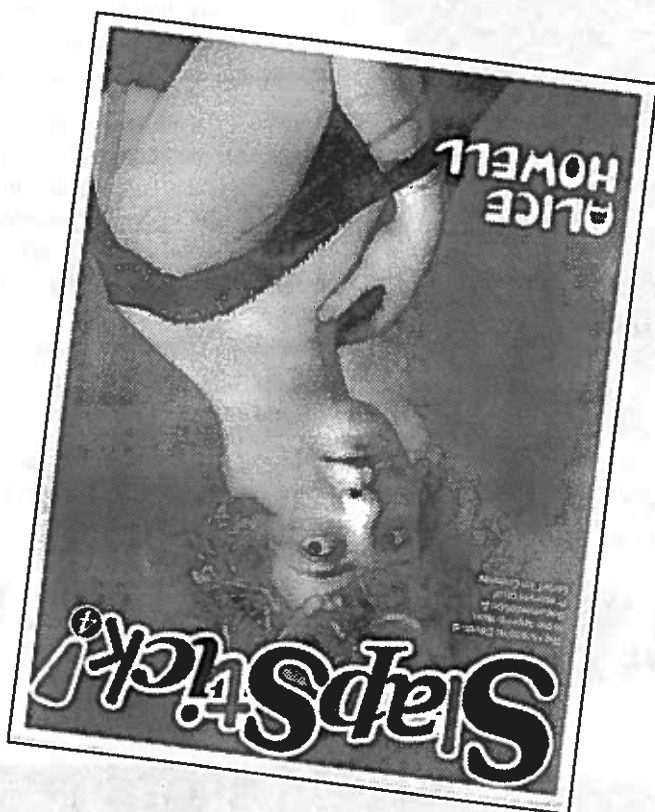
New Title Screened:

While some sources have speculated that Marcel Perez may have died as late as 1933, this 1930 census report helps limit the probable date of his death to somewhere between mid 1927 and April 1, 1930. It's very odd that an obit has yet to turn up from trade magazines or *Variety* – almost as if Perez had never existed. Even on Marcel Jr.'s California Death Index listing they give the mother's maiden name as Elmenendorf, but the father's name is left a blank.

any survivors or offspring.



bombings against government officials. They become so successful that they become a target for bombings themselves. This short, part of Perez's 1910 - 1915 starring series of Robinet comedies for the Societa Anonima Ambrosio of Turin, was recently rediscovered and restored by a collaboration that includes George Eastman House, the Cineteca del Friuli and the National Library of Norway. This preserved version had its premiere in October at the 2003 Pordenone Silent Film Festival.



Alice Howell:

In *SLAPSTICK* #7 I reported that the Nederlands Filmmuseum had turned up a nitrate chunk of Alice Howell's early Century comedy *NEPTUNE'S NAUGHTY DAUGHTER* ('17). Afterwards Bo Berglund, the Swedish expert on American silent comedy, wrote that he found an almost complete print in 1998 at the Danish Film Museum in Copenhagen. The short was catalogued as *DEN SOMAND HAN MAA LIDE (A SEAMAN HAS TO SUFFER)* a 1919 Danish comedy directed by Lau Lauritzen, with Oscar Stribolt and Laurits Olsen, but when screened it turned out to be *NEPTUNE'S*. Bo says that he believes the museum made a dupe negative back in the 1960's, and that the nitrate print he screened was a bit brittle but otherwise in fine shape in 1998.

My thanks to Norbert Apling, Robert Arkus, Bo Berglund, Rob Farr, Sam Gill, Cole Johnson, Mark Johnson, Jim Kerkhoff, Hooman Mehran, Joe Moore, Richard M. Roberts, Eli Rongen, Steve Rydzewski, Brent Walker, and Daniel C. Pati and the Staff of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

SPEED (1921) Mirth Comedy, PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez. Syn: "The big scene in 'Speed' is a cabaret interior which took a full week to construct. Over two hundred people were engaged for this scene, merely as 'atmosphere,' in addition to a chorus of pretty cabaret girls together with a jazz band." - MPW 7/16/1921. 2 rls.

WILD (1921) Mirth Comedy, PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez. Syn: "The comedian appears in a Western role, with bucking bronchos, cowboys, Indians, and other characters associated with Western atmosphere." - MPW 7/23/1921. 2 rls.

THE KNOCKOUT (1921) Mirth Comedy, PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez. Syn: "Burlesque of the Dempsey-Carpenter championship bout." - MPW 8/13/1921. 2 rls.

MOVING (1921) Mirth Comedy, PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. Syn: Lobby cards suggest a depiction of the trials and tribulations of moving. 2 rls.

WEEK END (1921) Mirth Comedy, PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. Syn: The Nederlands Filmmuseum has the first reel, which has Dorothy having fun on a weekend trip while Tweedy has a terrible time. 2 rls. (NFM).

PINCHED (1921) Mirth Comedy, PD: Schiller Prods. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. Syn: Lobby cards suggest that Tweedy gets a job as a plumber. 2 rls. (NFA).

Sanford Comedies:

Probably the most mysterious series that Perez ever made are the six comedies for Sanford Productions. It was while shooting this group that the accident, which resulted in the loss of his leg, occurred. None are known to exist, but recently a tiny scrap of info surfaced in the 6/17/1922 Motion Picture News:

SECOND TWEEDY COMEDY IS COMPLETED

The second of the series of two-reel Tweedy comedies, produced by the Sanford Productions, is now completed and the releasing title is "Take A Tip." This is the race track story in which they took their entire acting company to Tia Juana, Mexico, to the race track in order to secure actual race track scenes and atmosphere.

Up until now it's been impossible to determine where this series was shot, but this item, and the fact that Perez was at the same time directing Sanford's Pete Morrison Westerns, which needed convincing Western settings, suggest that the probable base of operations was California.

New Robinet Title:

ROBINET ANARCHICO / TWEEDLEDUM AS AN ANARCHIST (1913) PD: Ambrosio. C: Marcel Fabre (Perez). 6 min. Syn: Robinet leads a group of terrorists that carry out a series of

Eddie LeVeque – Keeper of the Keystone Flame

By Michael Campino

PART I: The Road to Keystone

Although the death of Mack Sennett on November 5, 1960 marked the end of an era, it also served as the catalyst for a renewed interest in Sennett's films and silent comedy.

Over the next three decades, no one was more responsible for keeping alive the legacy of Mack Sennett and Keystone than Eddie LeVeque. A pallbearer at Sennett's funeral, LeVeque kept the antics of the Keystone Kops in the public eye from 1962 until 1986, when he was forced into retirement by a broken hip at the age of ninety.



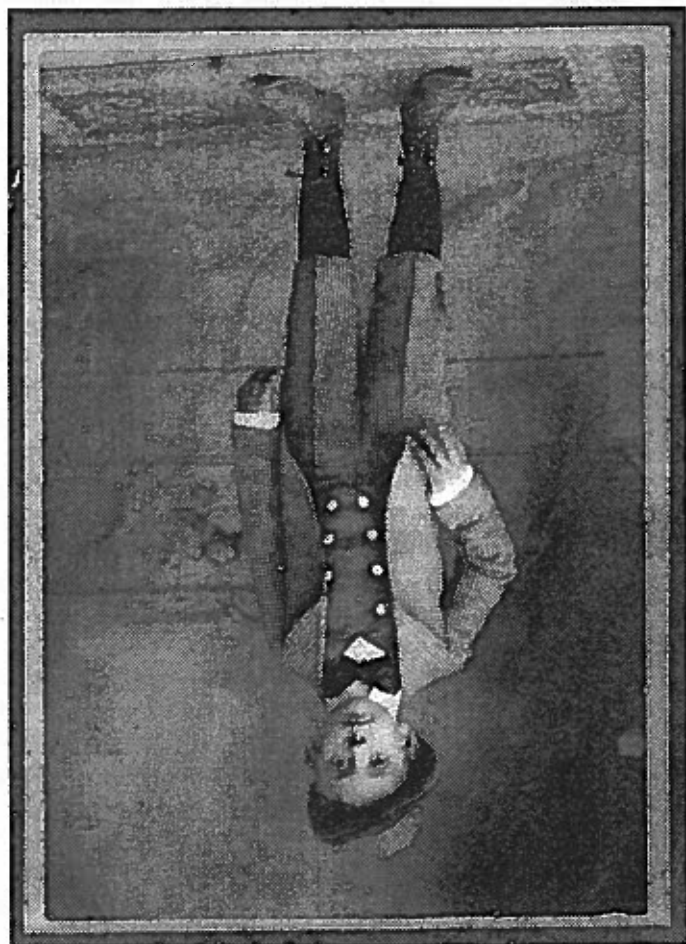
"Keystone Eddie," the last active Keystone Kop. It was somehow fitting that Eddie was the last performing Kop; no comic ever enjoyed the role more.

Eddie LeVeque was born June 4, 1896 in Juarez, Mexico. His father, Edward LeVeque Senior, was a French businessman, gambler and money lender from New Orleans who had business ventures in both El Paso and Juarez. His mother, Carlota Carcena, came from a well-to-do family in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

Eddie's earliest days were spent among family in Texas and in Mexico. Eddie became especially close to his maternal grand uncle, Rito Armendariz, who had chosen a career in show business over the priesthood. Eddie recalled his uncle in a lengthy 1973 interview with Walter Wagner, published in *You Must Remember This*: "I've been in show business practically all my life. I was first influenced by my maternal grand uncle, Rito Armendariz, who became the black sheep of the

Top, Eddie LeVeque, 1987, courtesy of the author. Left, pallbearers for Mack Sennett. Eddie LeVeque is fourth in line on the right. Other pallbearers in photo include Chester Conklin, Eddie Gibbon, Tom Kennedy, Del Lord, Glen Cavender, George Gray and Cover Ligon. Photo courtesy of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.





family. He was supposed to become a priest. Instead, he became an impresario, a pantomime, a pup-peteer who made his own marionettes, an actor, clown, writer, and musician. He also spent a great deal of his time drinking. But the bottle didn't seem to hurt him. He died pushing ninety.

By the time I was four years old I was acting in some of his plays. I did a few boy parts, but more often I played girls, just like in the days of Shakespearean theatre. When I was seven, my parents allowed me to go on the road with Uncle Rito and his troupe. At first my mother was against it. But my father said, 'Well it will make a man out of him. He loves show business. Let him be what he wants to be.' We traveled and did shows in big and little towns throughout Mexico, Texas and Arizona.'

It was Uncle Rito who first introduced Eddie to the new world of motion pictures. In a 1970 article written for Hollywood Studio Magazine, Eddie remembered his first movie-viewing experiences:

About 1904 my uncle bought an Edison projector and combined live shows with movies. Since electricity was not always available in some places, he used gas light in which either was part of the formula. It gave a remarkable white light. He ran mostly French films, Pathe Freres, Gaumont, Eclair, etc. They were short films. Some of these were about French Gendarmes chasing a crook up and down hilly, narrow streets, overturning push carts, and as the chase progressed more cops & civilians joined the chase until the

1 Walter Wanger, *You Must Remember This*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1975, pp. 45-46

thief was caught. These short Gendarme chases were the forerunners of the Keystone Kops. My uncle was a movie fan, and whenever I would go home from my run away trips, we used to go together to movie houses in El Paso where we saw nothing but American pictures. I used to love to travel & would run away from home and beat my way on freight & passenger trains. I rode the SP, the G&H, the Rock Island, the Texas & Pacific, the Santa Fe & other rails without paying a cent. We used to love to watch Biograph comedies.'

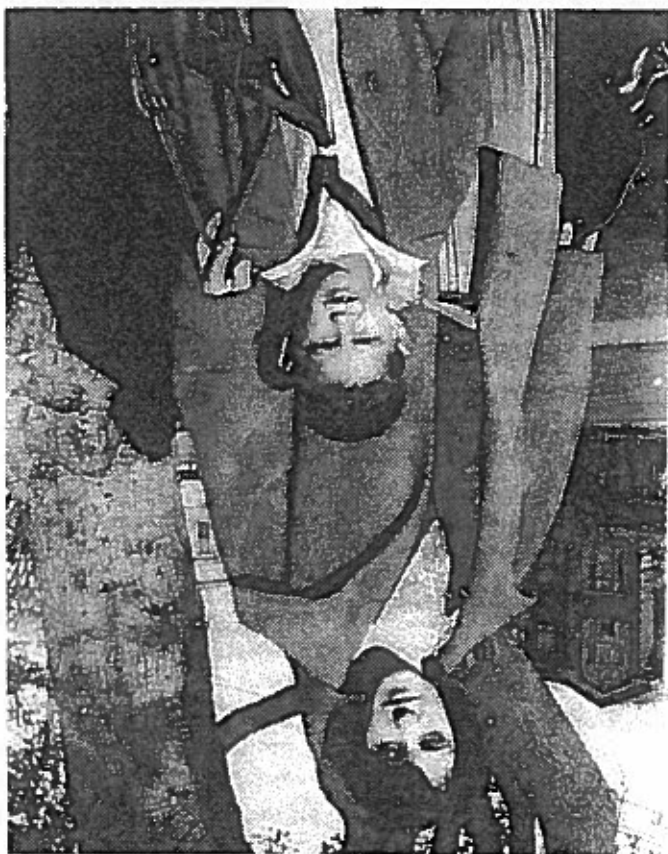
Eddie's travels with Uncle Rito lasted for three years, ending only when his uncle died. Eddie returned to El Paso, where in 1906 his father was jumped and beaten by two assailants armed with sand-bags. A successful entrepreneur and sporting man, Edward LeVeque Sr. often carried large sums of money, and was consequently at risk. The elder LeVeque suffered a fractured skull in the attack, lingering for two years before finally succumbing to his injuries.

For the next several years Eddie curbed his wanderlust and remained close to home until a chance meeting with a Pathe News cameraman at the El Paso YMCA in early 1911. Almost sixty years later, Eddie recalled the fateful meeting:

In early Spring of 1911, when I was fourteen, I met a Pathe cameraman at the El Paso YMCA. He needed someone who spoke Spanish and was willing to act as an interpreter for \$7 a week. I told him that I was an orphan and for the second time I ran away from home. Pancho Villa was not even a Colonel then, he was Chief of

Left, Eddie in Juarez, Mexico, January 1902. Above Eddie with unidentified family member in El Paso, Texas, circa 1905.

Photos courtesy Gilbert LeVeque.



Film Co. pictures which, by the way, consisted of brief stories of about a half reel, the other half reel usually was about how sardines were canned, or bottles made, etc. I approached Harry Atkinson at the casting window, & showed him my stills. He was not impressed. It was about 8 A.M. and there must have been about 20 people, including children, standing on the sidewalk hoping for a call. Along with my stills, I had some postcards of the Mexican Revolution with me standing along side Pancho Villa and men of his band. That caught Harry Atkinson's eye and interest. Charlie Avery, actor and director, was just going out on location. Charlie needed an extra prop boy to assist the cameraman, and whatever else might turn up. Harry told Charlie that I was not only an actor but had been assistant cameraman to a Pathe newsmen taking pictures of the Mexican Revolution. Although World War One was several months old, the Mexican Revolution and Pancho Villa had caught the imagination of the American people. Eddie Gribbon took me under his wing and helped correct my English and we became intimate pals until he died in 1965. Jack Dillon, Eddie Cline, Charlie Avery, Harry Atkinson and others took a liking to me, since I used to show them the best places to eat good Mexican or Spanish food, as well as helping them meet handsome Mexican Senoritas of the upper class, refugees from the revolution.

The fellows at Keystone used to kid my English, and the more they kidded me the more mistakes I purposely made. It had been the same at the American Film Company. But I had learned that by pretending I made glaring speech mistakes, besides being overly polite, was a humorous attraction to older fellows who would take me places just to show me to their girls. Some of these fellows were directors & big actors, and it was the same at Keystone.

I first ran into Fatty Arbuckle about 1909 or 1910, he was doing a vaudeville act at the Happy Hour Theater in El Paso, a high class vaudeville theatre and movie house. It was late afternoon and he was standing in front of the theater talking to the owner. I asked for a job as a projection assistant, and Fatty said that I could have the job if I went to the Unique Theater & borrowed their left hand key to raise the curtain. The manager at Unique told me to try the Wigwam theater, but the owner, Mr. Lynch, who had been my father's friend, told me that they were fooling me. I pointed to Fatty as the one who sent me on the errand. Mr. Lynch told me to tell that fat guy that he was a bum and to run. Returning, I called Fatty that laughing his head off. At Keystone, Fatty didn't recognize me, and he used to hand me a dollar bill with instructions to get a whale sandwich or elephant sandwich, or some other crazy thing. One time he gave me five dollars, told me to keep the change, and to go from store to store downtown to buy some ridiculous merchandise that didn't exist. I did go downtown to the Pantages instead. Later I told him that I went from store to store and the lady clerks had been shocked. He, Slim Summerville and others got a big kick out of my story.

Fatty told me to keep the five bucks, which I knew he would. A couple of days later I asked him if he wanted me to go on another errand. He looked at me with a quizzing eye & said, 'Who has been kidding who? Have I been the sucker all the time?' Then I reminded him of our first encounter in El Paso. He laughed and shook his head. He was a great and generous sport. We used to work for \$3 a day, and \$5 if you furnished your own luxedo. But room and board with breakfast & dinner & lunch & your clothes washed was

some 200 men, among whom was an American Doctor and 18 or 20 other Americans, mostly Socialists from Los Angeles who believed that Mexican peons (farm labor) should be freed from working from sun up to sun down for 18 cents a day, and from paying the debts incurred by their fathers & grandfathers in the commissaries of the rich land and cattle owners. They belonged to the Industrial Workers of the World and were derided as the 'Wobblies' or 'Wobblies'. In those days hardly any Mexican spoke English and vice versa. Thus, I became a sort of unofficial interpreter for Pancho Villa, Jose de La Blanco and other rebel chiefs with Americans in their bands.

Lewis, the cameraman, soon learned the truth that I was a runaway kid. Nevertheless, he gave me a letter of introduction to some man with the Selig Film Company in Chicago, and in June 1913 I hopped a freight out of El Paso and some three weeks later landed in Chicago. At Selig I was told that things were quiet, but to try the Essanay Studios or the American Film Company. The American Film needed a helper in the lab, soon I was playing messenger or office or delivery boy. Jack Warren Kerrigan and Vivian Lester were the stars and Richardson the Heavy. The company opened a Studio in California to make Westerns, but I returned home. Villa was now a Generalissimo of the Northern Division. I often rode in his auto with the Chauffeur, a redheaded boy of 15-years old and old school friend. As Villa sat with other officers in the back, he used to point to me as his blond son [El Guertio] and to the chauffeur as his redheaded son.

In 1973, Eddie spoke to Walter Wagner about Villa in great detail: He was a short man with wide gaps in his teeth who wore a long mustache. A friend of mine was Villa's chauffeur. He introduced me to Villa, who promptly made me his interpreter. It was exciting for a while but, after a short time I got bored. And it began to dawn on me that I was working for a man who took pleasure in robbing, terror and rape. He was exploiting the same peons he was supposed to be helping, though I never saw any of that personally. All we'd do was visit one city after another in his big seven-seat open black touring car. The only break in the routine with Villa was when news photographers from the United States turned up. Villa loved to pose for them, and they were fascinated by his colorful reputation. Villa was the biggest publicity hound I ever saw, worse than any movie star. He'd let them shoot pictures of him as long as they liked. I was frequently in the snapshots. Once I borrowed a gun from a member of his gang and posed alone with Villa. Travelling with Villa was really monotonous, so one night I slipped out of his camp and walked sixty miles to El Paso. I'd decided by now that I was going to Hollywood.

In 1970, Eddie described his journey from El Paso to Keystone:

I wanted to travel in comfort, so I became a news butch (news agent) in passenger trains selling postcards, magazines, souvenirs, etc. In June 1915 I went to work as a prop boy, bit actor and Keystone Kop. In those days everybody played Keystone Kop at one time or another, even the big star comics such as Fatty Arbuckle, Ford Sterling, who usually played the Chief, Harry McCoy, Bobby Dunn, & others. It was just as hard to get into pictures then, as it was later. I had three or four 8 X 10 stills of myself in some of the American

LeVeque reminisced about his early days at Keystone:

friend for \$1.50.

only \$5 a week. For amusement, there was Solomon's Penny Dance on Grand Avenue. Car fare was only five cents and ice cream sodas were a nickel. Excellent Italian or French restaurants served meals for 25 cents, you could have a glorious Sunday fill late with a girl!

was agile and it came easy for me.⁷ It was around this time that Eddie first got the chance to play a Keystone Kop, the role of a lifetime, as it turned out. Looking back upon his days as a Kop, Eddie recalled:

automobile or trolley car. I'd take the prattl.

subject with Walter Wagner:
From prop boy I graduated into doubling for girls. When one of the female stars on the lot couldn't do a stunt or a fall, I'd put on a dress and do it for her, things like jumping from a speeding

needed. Our pay was \$3 a day; Six years later, Eddie elaborated on the same

was actually more than a property man, because back in 1915 we all did everything. If an actor was suddenly needed, we dropped our props or our hammers or whatever and got in front of the camera. We assisted the director, doubled for the women, adjusted the reflectors, played bits and made ourselves useful wherever we were.

and Sciences.

Below, scene from *Won By A Fool*. Eddie on far left. Courtesy Mack Sennett Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts

Courtesy Michael Hawks

Left, lobby card from Won By A Fool.





Courtesy Gilbert LeVeque

Eddie with lifelong pal and fellow Keystone Kop, Eddie Gribbon.

You had a hard time with English but you have done well in learning LeVeque.

publicity that you were called 'Chile', 'Mex' and eventually Eddie Keystone Kops and you were mentioned. Also, another 'bit' of In going over my scrap books, I ran into some publicity about the Minna Duffee Arbuckle recalled:

ownership rights of the Keystone Kops name.) needed by Eddie to help fend off legal challenges regarding his in Sherman's book (which was never published) or may have been shared by his old Keystone mates may have been intended for use named Jory Sherman to do a book on his life story. The memories had worked in. At one point, Eddie was collaborating with a writer known at Keystone and asked for their help in recalling the films he in 1971, Eddie sought out the few surviving old timers he had at Keystone was frustrating not only to the author, but to Eddie as well. The scant amount of factual information available about Eddie's days

names were seldom noted in the records. fail to mention him. Bit players were listed only as "extra," and their cast credits and film production scripts. Studio payroll ledgers also Because LeVeque was not a major performer, he was not listed in impossible to pinpoint which films Eddie worked in while there. Though he was at Keystone for almost two years, it is almost

moments later as another character. ous roles in the film. Killed off in one scene, he would reappear by D.W. Griffith for his 1916 epic, *Intolerance*. Eddie performed numerous the Keystone lot. While moonlighting, LeVeque occasionally found work off Like so many other bit players, LeVeque occasionally found work off

advances, the trouble started, and the father called the Kops. always promising to take her to New York. When she resisted his coat who held the mortgage and had an eye on the girl. He was the tramp in the haystack and the villain with the high hat and long daughter, the stupid boy who wanted to marry the farmer's daughter, ones everything was rural, countrified. There was the farmer, his using stories where the plots were laid in the city. But in the first The pictures gradually became more sophisticated when we started of the cars and do flops, and it all looked real on the screen. actually we were in a head-on crash. Then, of course, we'd fall out impression that when our cars just bumped into each other lightly, propmen would turn it, and the panorama moved, giving the and city buildings and trolley cars. A couple of carpenters or moving panorama. It was a painting with trees and telephone poles up mechanically. For the collisions we used what was called a The fast chases were trick photography. The film would be speeded forty, which was still dangerous when you leaped from a moving car. zoosh, one hundred miles an hour. Actually we were going about was to make it funny. On the screen it looked like we were traveling that spirit of good-natured competition. The only thing that mattered but everyone was trying to outdo everyone else. There was always and you just took chances. I took many a fall that was unnecessary, there was an exhilaration that came over you. You forgot yourself, But it was strange, once we were in the car and the chase began, was the only 'direction' we received.

Before a Kops sequence, the director would say, 'All right, boys, do what you want, do what's funny, only don't hurt yourselves.' That middle and the end of what the picture was supposed to be about. But it was strange, once we were in the car and the chase began, was the only 'direction' we received.

Courtesy Gilbert LeVeque

Eddie at the wireless during his stint in the U.S. Army.



End of Part I

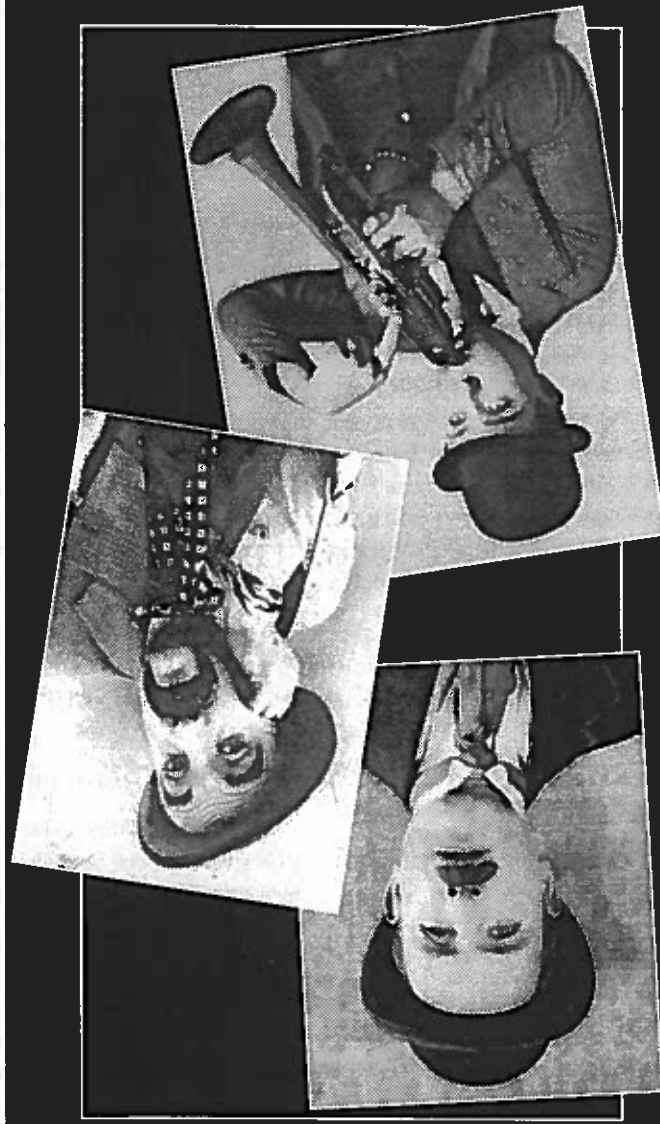
Next Issue:

Part II

The Return Of

The Keystone Kops

SLAPSTICON II



— BOSTON —

our English. Being young at the time you [sic] worked at Keystone it was easier for you to learn. Just wondered if you remember those days. They were great days and a wonderful place to work. Nice to know we made the world laugh. Not many laughs any more."

Erle C. Kenton remembered that, "In 1916, when I was Bob Kerr's co-director at the Keystone-Mack Sennett lot in Edendale, Eddie LeVeque played a waiter in one of our comedies."¹⁰ [Authors' note: The film described by Kenton may have been *Black Eyes and Blue* but I have not yet been able to substantiate this.]

Chester Conklin stated that, "before World War One, when I was at the old Keystone-Mack Sennett lot, Eddie LeVeque played a 'jailbird' in one of my comedies, titled: *Dodging His Doom* (1917). Like most everyone of us, sometimes he played a Keystone Kop."¹¹ [Authors' note: A partial print of *Dodging His Doom*, considered lost for many years, was discovered in the Library of Congress film collection, under the title *Without Hope*, by Brent Walker in the summer of 2003.]

Eddie Sutherland, who went on to a long career as a top-notch comedy director after leaving Keystone, was a lifelong friend of LeVeque's. Sutherland remembered making a movie at Keystone which featured a college football game. [Editor's note: *Won By A Foot* (1917).] As he crossed the goal line and scored the winning touchdown, Sutherland was tackled and buried beneath a pile of football players, squashing him. He heard the director yell "cut" but yet someone continued jumping up and down on the human pile-up, leaving him stuck underneath. Clanking up through the heap of actors laying on top of him, Sutherland was able to spot who the acrobatic wise-guy on top was — his buddy, Eddie LeVeque!"

Less than two months after *Won By A Foot* was finished, on April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. While on vacation in San Francisco in early May of 1917, Eddie enlisted in the U.S. Army, and joined the Army Air Service Corps. Eventually he was transferred to Texas, where he spent most of the conflict at Kelly Field.

When the war ended, Eddie returned to Hollywood, but his days working for Mack Sennett and Keystone were over. "I never went back to Keystone, not even for a visit. My apprenticeship days were over."¹²

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for their invaluable help in piecing together the life and career of Eddie LeVeque: Faye Thompson at the Margaret Herrick Library for her support and assistance in guiding me through the massive Mack Sennett collection; film historians Sam Gill and Brent Walker for sharing their considerable knowledge of silent comedy; and most of all I wish to acknowledge and thank Gilbert LeVeque. Gilbert spent many hours helping me gain insight into his father's career. It is through his generosity and kind permission that many photos from Eddie LeVeque's personal scrapbook have been brought to light and published with my article.

- 9 Letter to Eddie LeVeque from Minna Durtce Arbuckle, February 10, 1917. Eddie LeVeque clipping file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
- 10 Sworn statement made on Eddie's behalf by Erle C. Kenton, February 12, 1971. Eddie LeVeque clipping file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
- 11 Sworn statement made on Eddie's behalf by Chester Conklin, February, February 8, 1971. Eddie LeVeque clipping file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
- 12 Gilbert LeVeque, conversation with Eddie Sutherland, circa 1970.
- 13 Hollywood Studio Magazines, April 1970.

MOLLY O'

By William T. Sherman*

*excerpt from *The Mabel Normand Source Book*
With additional materials from Marilyn Slater

“What Sam (Goldwyn) knew

was that Mabel's cheeks were no longer as round as apples. She was thin. She photographed without her old time sparkle and bounce in recent pictures, not yet released which I had not seen. She was unhappy and ill and she looked it. We were amazed and upset when she reported for wardrobe tests.

All those years of neglecting herself, of fun for fun's sake, had left a mark on a girl who was after all was very small.

She was still beautiful. Her eyes still

laughed....

Mabel was happy with the cast of *Molly O'*, especially happy with Dick Jones. Both Dick and I had long talks about Mabel late at night in the tower office. Mabel wasn't the same. She was ill!

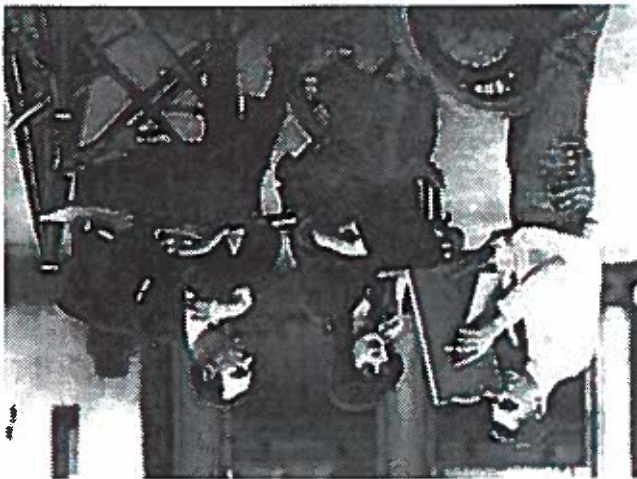
The “she was still beautiful” might sound like merely a formal politeness, but strange as it may seem it is still true was beautiful in spite of her being “unhappy and ill” – which was also true. But she is beautiful in a different way. She is less athletic, much more subdued, more hesitating, generally tending toward a more quiet humor and manner. She is as sympathetic as ever, however, in *Molly O'* we see for the first time (at least based on film extent), the sad Mabel Normand. This is all the more interesting because it occurs, before both the Arbuckle and Taylor cases had ever occurred.

Naturally, it would seem to make sense to conclude that it was the alleged health problems referred to in Betty Fussell's book that brought I Mack Sennett in King of Comedy, pp. 221-22.

Mack Sennett



Dick Jones waits while Mabel adjusts her make-up



about this despondency. How painful it must have been to have borne such a secret most of us can hardly guess. Perhaps her going back to Sennett was an act of contrition of sorts. As for Sennett, uninformed as he was as to the “real” cause of her unhappiness, there is a certain sense in *Molly O'* that he is welcoming Mabel back as the prodigal. It is a respectfully affectionate and not at all condescending, nevertheless, it is the welcome back of the prodigal. “*Molly O' - I Love You*,” reads the title of the sheet music promoting the film.

One gets the strong impression of the rejected lover elatedly taking back into his arms his sweetheart whom “fast living” had wrought havoc with. *Molly O'* was clearly intended to be a major effort by Sennett, and since it was the single film which in later years he wanted to re-do again, perhaps he thought of *Molly O'* as (or had hoped it would be) his magnum opus?

Its plot is less emotionally coherent than Mickey, yet in its parts, *Molly O'* is often both very touching and amusing. It has variety: light comedy, thrills, very serious drama – everything but slapstick. Though the transition from the light come-

warding, and at times dramatic, *Molly O'*, overall, is a very relevant, of its story fairly unbelievable, handled awkwardly and, much

2 “*Molly O'*” at the time was a then familiar a nickname for a common Irish working girl. The popular World War I song, “It's a Long Long Way to Tipperary,” for example, has these lines:

Paddy wrote a letter to his Irish Molly O,
Saying, if you should not receive it,
Write and let me know
If I make mistakes in spelling,
Molly dear, said he,
Remember it's the pen that's bad,
Don't blame the blame on me.

D.W. Griffith



All this, and Carl Stockdale as fairy godmother to boot!

True, *Molly O* is intentionally very different from the traditional tale in that it attempts to give some presentation of ordinary life in its harsh and unglamorous aspects. From the outset of the film the poverty stricken tenement area and tension filled home, in which the O'Dair's live is realistically portrayed. Not only does Molly come from a poor family, but she is the daughter of a washer-woman no less. The father, Tim O'Dair, is a coarse and violent-tempered manual laborer, without the least bit of sentimentality about him. His junior work partner, Jimmy Smith, here humorously played by Eddie Gribbon, is a cynical oaf he hopes to make his son-in-law, without feeling it necessary to consult Molly much on the subject.

To cap off the family portrait, Molly's supportive younger brother, for all his good intentions, has a gambling addiction. The villains are meaner and more callous than in Mickey. Though serving-maid Mickey is slapped by her cousin, Elsie Drake, for her disobedience, here Molly gets slapped by her father's friend, Jimmy Smith, even though he had intended to marry her. By the same token, Mickey's fun loving Reggie Drake is almost a "nice guy" compared to the cruel and methodical Fred Manchester. This heightened atmosphere flavored with violence disturbingly reflects both the tension left over from the War and the onset of the Prohibition era.

Yet for all the realistic touches, the story is still basically that of Brother's Grimm, mixed with some Griffith.

Although Mickey and the Goldwyn film *Joan of Plattsburg* did allow her room to do something a little serious, in *Molly O*, more than ever before,

4 A title card in the film actually has Molly making a joking reference to this: "I feel like Cinderella only my fairy godmother is a man."

Eddie Gribbon plays Jimmy Smith the cynical oaf villain, and George Nichols her father



The story is essentially a Cinderella formula that is repeated in her subsequent Sennett films, namely: Upper Class people (in a given instance rightly or wrongly) look down on poor Molly (Suzanna, or Sue Graham). Molly is in love with a young man, who is someone of virtue,

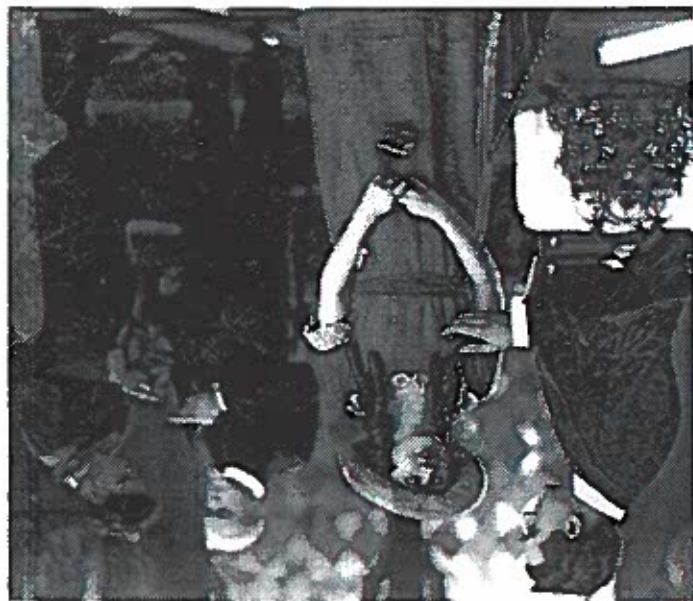
also all sparkle wonderfully and give excellent support.

Anna Hernandez, Ben Deely are Jacqueline Logan, Albert Hackert, Jack Mulhall, Eddie Gribbon, the consummate professional, an intensity to his role bespeaking and other notable authors), brings (including screen versions of Ibsen had also directed for Griffith from Mickey, and who years earlier Manchester. George Nichols, back than Lowell Sherman's Fred never a more suave screen villain much as one could ask. There was "pep," Mabel and all the cast are as obviously lacks much of her earlier

Although she is more pale and worked, is unmistakable. under whom he had only recently positive influence of D. W. Griffith, artful and imaginative. The very orchestrating of scenes is often out of his players, and his have a knack for getting the most are usually uninspired. Yet he does lighting, and close-ups, at the time, Jones' use of camera angles, lasting merit. Director F. Richard nevertheless, is a great film of weaknesses are often obvious, it, tically powerful, film. While its

3 Sherman as well had played the seducing villain success *Way Down East* earlier that same year.

fight and all ends happily. young man. But there is a perfect romance with the threatens to ruin her frowning father also meaning but misguided, amorously, and the well Molly (in this case man. The villain pursues the handsome young woman" with designs on figure, and the "other tender-hearted mother actors, like the comic, are the usual stock character and courage. There



Jack Mulhalla, the young Dr. Bryant meets Molly O and her brother, played by Albert Hackett, meet at the Priest's residence (seen missing from film)

of Molly O (of what remains of it at least) is all, rather routine and serves mostly to set up the remainder of the story.⁵ It is not nearly so effective as that part running from the masquerade ball sequences to the end of the picture.

A public masquerade ball (which in those days was not so unusual) is held for charity, in which members of the different social classes come together. Against her father's stern wishes, Molly sneaks off to attend the event dressed in a magnificent 18th century French-style court gown and wig. Interestingly, the villain Manchester's costume is of that of an effete dandy of the same period, while the hero, Dr. Bryant, by contrast, wears something more in the way of a medieval prince. At one point, Molly, stumbling in what she thinks is a back lobby, suddenly finds herself on center stage. A curtain suddenly opens up from behind, revealing her to the joy and laughter of the entire throng.

There follows a resounding outpouring of affectionate applause and cheers, not so much for Molly, the story character, but for Mabel herself. One feels quite palpably their great warmth and love of her. This is no doubt the most magic scene in the film. What makes these sequences especially interesting, and perhaps may be considered the real theme of *Molly O* as a film is: Mabel from her heart loves and cares

⁵ This maybe too hasty a generalization as 1 reel of the extant film is missing, and it comes from this earlier part of the film.

Mabel Normand at 29 and 19 years old



Mabel has the opportunity to get into a role and situations with some real tragic range. And but for her sometimes not looking well, she usually arises to the occasion wonderfully.

But coming into the role, there are some unavoidable difficulties. We mentioned previously her not looking well or happy. In addition to this she is world famous Mabel Normand 29 years old playing a laundry maid in her late teens or early twenties. Like with Rosa, it is simply asking too much of the audiences to believe her in such a part. One interesting way, and with a certain amount of success, Mabel and Jones gets around this is that there is a bit of caricature about Molly. She is somewhat surreal the way Chaplin and some of the Keystone creations were surreal: absurd, exaggerated characters in a never-the-less very down to earth world – though, here, without the slapstick. In the opening sequences of the film, one is perhaps at first disappointed because Mabel is not convincing, that is, if we expect her portrayal to be realistic. If, though, we see Molly, with her wide dark eyes, wide floppy

hat, and long Pickford girls (like Mickey), as something of a comic caricature, then we are able to accept her within the story, and the rest of the film goes smoothly on this basis.

Early on, Mabel has some nice quiet scenes, such as the one on the park bench "philosophizing" with the "silhouette man," Carl Stockdale. Here, where the message "dreams come true for those who believe in them" is directly stated, Mabel charms. However, other than this particular scene, most of the first half

for all, and, all, (i.e. those in the cast and production generally), in turn, love Mabel. It is truly very sweet, and not mawkish as it might sound, because the feelings of both are obviously genuine.

Molly being mistaken for Dr. Bryant's fiancée (who is presently absent with her secret lover, played by Ben Deely), she and Dr. Bryant are awarded the most beautiful couple of the ball. All then are asked to unmask. In her unmasking at ball Mabel is splendid – there is clearly such a grand stir of affection by all towards her – again you feel it – and Mabel responds radiantly. It is a strange thing to try to describe, but a good analogy would be to a folded rose bud which, in a matter of moments, suddenly and wondrously bursts forth in it beauty (such as might be seen with time-lapse photograph). In this case, it is Mabel's femininity and charm that blossom in glory. The camera work is unfortunately rather flat, otherwise it is one of the most entralling and memorable moments in all of Mabel's films. The wonder, elation beaming from Muhlhal's eyes, almost to tears, in reaction to her, is evidently more than mere acting.



Molly O becomes the princess

Molly is in many ways a spirited Pickford innocent – at one point Sennett offered the script of *Molly O* to Pickford herself, who turned it down.

Unlike the kind of young girl roles the early Mary Pickford is usually remembered for, Molly is to some extent allowed her sexuality. Here though the sexuality is suggested, without being graphic or overtly stated. It comes in the form of a charming scene in which Dr. Bryant, after amorously strolling with her home from the masquerade ball, is about to depart as she enters her doorstep. As he is about to leave, she stands with her back against the door. He instantly returns and very tenderly kisses her forearm which is bent outward upon the doorway; she in a sigh filled trance permitting: her womanhood having been woken within.

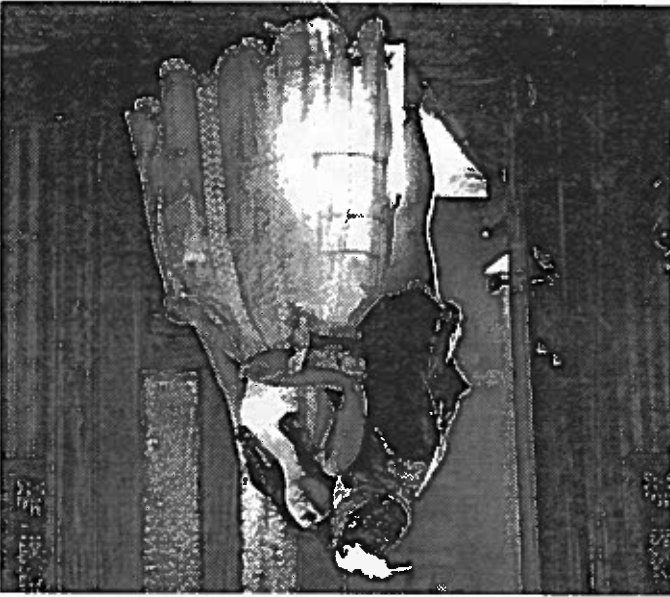
Molly O stealing cookies

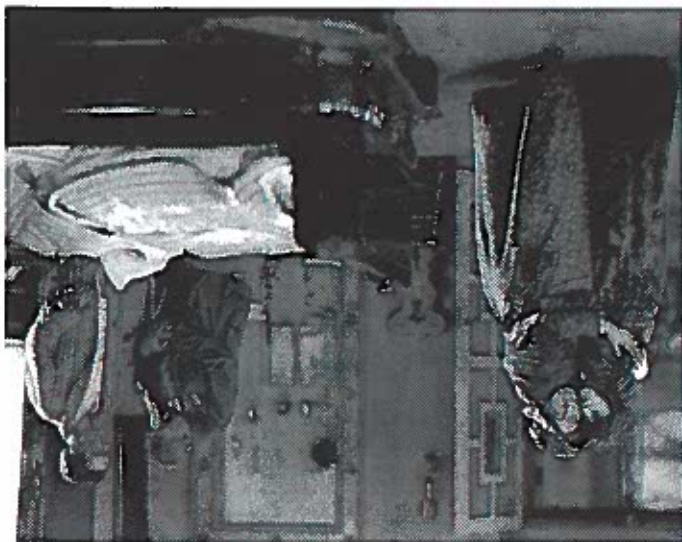


Just as Bryant departs, she turns aside and opens up her eyes to see her father glaring furiously at her. O'Dair unleashes a violent tirade of anger and disgust. Nichols as O'Dair is more than convincing in the violence of his temper. So much so that one is tempted to wonder if his rage almost to tears may not, to some extent, have been inflamed by his (along with other people's) real life displeasure with Mabel, or more specifically, disapproval of Mabel's earlier "life of abandon" away from Sennett. Incurring the wrath of her father in this way, Molly packs her things and leaves home.

Next morning Tim O'Dair starts off hot after Molly, correctly surmising he will find her at Bryant's. He is let in by the butler into Bryant's wealthy

Dr. Bryant says good night to Molly O





Molly O's mother played by Anna Hernandez and George Nichols her violent father come to Bryant house

for thrilling adventure sequences as he would so well later do in films like *The Gaucho* (1927), with Douglas Fairbanks, and *Bulldog Drummond* (1929), with Ronald Colman. Though all – including Mabel – play their parts very nicely, Lowell Sherman, in particular, is a real treat as the stylish and calculating scoundrel.

In sum, *Molly O*, while certainly flawed, is an outstanding and unique film. We are most very blessed that it was not completely lost to us as had for many years been thought.

The magic Mabel Normand is now a classic vintage 1921 comic book. Not only is she dainty-dashing – she is darling. She even brought along a few of her funny friends. It is a joy to see their pranks once again just as they first appeared in the Kinema Komiks. As a special treat included on the back cover is a Larry Semon cut out toy, "The Jolly Professor" it dates back to 1909 and it really works!

To order the Mabel Normand Comic Book contact:
Fantagraphics.com

Or for information on anything Mabel Normand:
MarilynSlater@hotmail.com



Dr. Bryant kisses Molly O at the door

home. With a gun in his pants pocket, without giving notice of his presence he finds Bryant shaving in the bathroom, and Molly, dressed in bathrobe and pajamas, kicking up her legs on a nearby bed. He approaches Bryant from behind as if to sneak up on him, but Bryant sees him in this shaving mirror, and is able to surprise him before the other can shoot. A fistfight ensues, with Mabel as onlooker doing a Lillian Gish in distress performance, her eyes rolling up into her head in agony. Bryant finally knocks O'Dair flat, and it is revealed to the angry father that Molly and Bryant had already been married after the ball. The father, realizing that he almost just killed his son-in-law, breaks down ashamed and weeps. Molly carnally comforts him.

This is a bare and sketchy description of what are some momentarily tense, exciting and touching scenes. All are superb here, particularly George Nichols who gives a heart-wrenching performance, and director Jones, orchestrating the trio. The drama of a daughter's rebellion against her father in the name of love reminds one of the kind of moralistic and poetic "photo-plays" done at Biograph years earlier. But wait...the film is not yet over. From the reconciliation of father, daughter and son-in-law, we are taken into a mini-serial episode, or perhaps more appropriately the updated 1921 version of Barney Oldfield! If it is relevant to the main story it is relevant in either a very tangential or abstract way, otherwise it is



quite out-of-the-blue, and is best taken as a kind of dessert to the main course. While these scenes with the blimp, and settling the gambling debt of Molly's brother, are not what we would call high-art, they are, nevertheless, exciting and laugh provoking. Jones here shows his talented flair

6 This scene and O'Dair's stealthy entrance, incidentally, bear an eerie resemblance to what would occur in the Taylor murder only a few months later.

The Memoirs of Marie Mosquini

Edited by Cole Johnson

This is Part Two of an excerpt from an unpublished memoir written by silent screen comedienne, Marie Mosquini (1899-1983). She was born in Los Angeles, and was a fixture at Hal Roach Studios, playing leading ladies to such Pollard, Stan Laurel, Paul Patton, and Will Rogers. She left Roach in 1924, finding work in Universal comedies (and perhaps others), and in a handful of features, most important of which was Frank Borzage's SEVENTH HEAVEN (Fox '27). Her acting career came to a close with her marriage to inventor Dr. Lee DeForest in 1930. These memoirs were written off-and-on from at least 1951 to 1962. She never finished them, and at points they are tantalizingly choppy. Still, I think you'll appreciate hearing from Marie.

On our fifth cross country, coffee shopping trip from California to Chicago we came on from Reno over the Donner Pass into Truckee. It was early April and the mountains carrying plenty of snow – which brought back so vividly the winter we made "The Courtship of Miles Sandwich," a burlesque on the Courtship of Miles.

We were all housed in the hotel rooms above the station. Mama was with me as she was on all the location trips. It was 32 below zero in Truckee. Mama saved my hands, my nose was broken but the show went on!

Another great thrill in my picture career came when I was chosen to be Will Rogers leading lady, the most honored position ever offered anyone in a supporting role on the Hal Roach lot.

I have often wondered why Will Rogers put up with me for two years in 28 comedies when he might have had anyone he chose, and it must have been because I left him in peace. Although he was extremely friendly he also liked to be left alone, and I can't remember speaking to him first except for a "Good morning" or "Good night."

I learned to judge his moods from the way he wore his hat. When it was straight down over his eyes, I kept my distance. When Rogers wore his hat cocked over on one side, he was a- fixin' to let you know about something without coming right out and telling you about it.

Having grown up on a ranch, I knew it was characteristic among men of the range seldom to give advice openly. They would tell an appropriate little story and let it go at that. The listener was supposed to be sharp enough to get the point and profit by it. If he didn't, the sorrow was likely to be on his side. For instance, the Assistant Director of the company, a likable person, was forever late. There was some talk of his losing his job because of his tardiness.

One morning, as usual, he arrived all out of breath – late. I noticed Will Rogers shift the angle of his hat, down to one side over his eye, and he began with something like this:

"I once held a job with an outfit where a foreman named Joe was always late. Yep, poor old Joe. Right decent sort of critter, too. But he was always late."

With that Will Rogers stopped chewing gum and shifted his eyes real quick-like up to the brim of his hat and down, as if to say, "Yep, it's you I'm talking about." The Assistant Director did a bit of squirming.

Will Rogers continued, "The expiration date on the return-ticket home for Joe's mother-in-law had come. It was today or never. Well, Joe pulled into the railway station with his mother-

in-law in tow – only to see the tail end of the observation car making the hairpin turn out of town. "Bad business, this bein' late. Can get you into all kinds of trouble." But when W.R. wore his hat right smack on the back of his head, all was well.

The sky was the limit for the rest of the day, the set ringing with jokes and laughter. He was always on time, and I would see him in the morning from my dressing-room window, twirling



pepper hair, and he had beautiful teeth, a fine generous mouth, and those twinkling, friendly eyes. His hands I admired most of all: capable, strong, and dependable looking.

Apparently, Marie had just seen the 1962 remake of *State Fair*. Here, bringing forth more memories of Will Rogers:

Those who recall the earlier film version of Phil Strong's novel, co-starring Will Rogers and Janet Gaynor, may wonder how it would lend itself to musical treatment. But with melodies by Rodgers and Hammerstein of Oklahoma fame woven into its merry-making and its romancing, the rich human of mince-meat judging and Blue Boy's triumph at the stock pavilion, and all the fanfare and the excitement of a day at the fair, it is a wonderfully entertaining piece of Americana. The technician compositions are lovely to look at and the players are believable and likeable. The family life, farm life and good old Midwest humor make it a highly entertaining family picture. During the scenes of Blue Boy a nostalgic feeling came over me – for Will Rogers was particularly good in these scenes in the earlier picture also it recalled hectic experiences of my animal training career – which amused Will Rogers no end – for he loved animals.

This particular spring our pedigreed taugenbury nanny presented us with four snow white kids which Will Rogers named the Katzenjammer kids. Every morning almost from the time of their birth, I awakened at the crack of dawn before going to the studio, to begin their training. In less than a month, they were ready for the camera – so I thought. Will



With Will Rogers, Big Moments From Little Pictures



Courtesy John Carpenter

his rope, telling jokes one after another, and chewing gum like mad. If he wasn't twirling a rope, he was reading a newspaper or banging away on his old typewriter, with his glasses half way down his nose. When we were wanted for a scene, he would call, "Come on, Marie, let's knock on 'em." Will Rogers was very fond of Marie. "Mrs. Mosquini," he once said, "You look like an opera singer. Are you an opera singer?" "No, I am a business woman," she replied proudly. "I don't have time for this noon-sense." Her Basque accent was particularly prominent on certain words. "This money business." She dismissed the lusty, bawling, infant cinema with a waive of her hand. I stood by trembling, but afraid to say anything, afraid that Mama's rash words would get me fired. Instead Will Rogers approved. "I knew you were a smart woman. All this movie business is noon-sense." Will Rogers never spoke of himself or his own experiences, and I learned much about him and understood him better when I read his autobiography years later.



Will Rogers, Shirley Vernon, Anita Garvin, (unknown), Blanche Mehaffey and John McKenna, Los Angeles 1923

He referred to himself as the homeliest man in movies. On the contrary, he was a most attractive person. He had a splendid physique and wore clothes well when he chose to. His perfectly shaped head was topped with thick straight salt-and-

words "Howdy, Cal" just slipped out before I had time to think of "Mr. President."

Hal Roach gave Will Rogers a farewell party at the termination of his contract. W.R.'s salary was \$5,000 per week, quite a neat sum for those early, sans income tax, days. In his farewell speech to us, Will Rogers said, "You know, Mr. Roach has two luxuries, one of which is polo, and I'm the other one. He has sort of thought it over and feels that he can't afford both of us. So my dear friends and co-workers, I am leaving 'a martyr to polo."

My first introduction to Will Rogers' three children is vivid in my memory. We drove into the palatial grounds of his Beverly Hills estate on a warm California summer afternoon. Mary and Will, Jr. were riding bareback around the ring. Mary's eight little piglets were flying in the wind, and Will, Jr. was trying with all his might to pass his sister. Next we came to a beautiful blue pool. An instructor was swimming, diving, and lecturing. Jimmie Rogers, age about seven, was lying lazily on his side with his head in the palm of his hand. Will Rogers took in the picture.

"What's going on here?" he asked his youngest. "Now, Dad, you're paying the professor. You wouldn't want me in that swimming pool doing all the work..."

The next instant Jimmie was foundering around in the pool like a startled puppy.

On another occasion Jimmie was having a birthday party. When cake cutting time arrived he was all eagerness. It soon developed that he didn't want the cake as much as the prizes baked in it.

They were too slow in making their appearance to satisfy Jimmie, and I can still hear that little voice drawling, "I guess we shoulda put the cake through a strainer."

His straight Indian hair feel over his eye, just like his daddy's. It seems a pity that he didn't follow in his father's footsteps on the stage or in motion pictures, where we might all enjoy his pleasant personality, wit, and cleverness.

But he did follow in his father's footsteps in another fashion. He loves stock, cattle, and ranch life, and has the joy which comes to us who thrill over distances as we ride, counting range after range as far as the eye can see.

Mary, the second born, gave me the impression of being the most serious of the three children. She was a plain little girl who blossomed into a beautiful and attractive young lady. She had theatrical ambitions which, for some reason, did not materialize.

Will, Jr., the eldest, possessed the gentleness and sweetness of his mother. His flair for writing came from both parents. Few knew of Mrs. Rogers' literary ability and how she helped her husband with his articles. Mrs. Rogers often times came in her chauffeur-driven car to wherever we were working on location, and together she and Will compiled the column which appeared in the daily papers.

I first met Mrs. Rogers on the same summer afternoon that I saw the children. She was dressed in a sheer, cotton challis print, her very light brown hair dressed in an "up do" roll.

Her skin was soft and transparent, and in spite of her effort toward plainness in her dress and manner, she had a prettiness which the cameras belied.

With much restraint I kept myself from saying aloud her name, "Betty Blake Rogers." Never have I known a person whose name was more completely suited to her personality, charm, and appearance.

Rogers would ask me, "How soon will these paper chewing cubs be ready, Marie? Hope you're doin' a better job than on Sir Charles".... a cute little pig I had trained to do a few cunning tricks, named also by Will Rogers, as he had a perfect little black ring surrounding one eye, which reminded one of a monocyte. Sir Charles was inclined toward temperamental, and did not relish taking direction from the studio animal trainer. Under the slightest pretext he would run off the set, squealing his little heart out, until he found me.

I didn't mind too much, since my price was \$6.00 a day without direction - \$4.00 additional for personal direction. But this feeling was not shared by Mr. Roach, the boss. This particular morning he happened on Will Rogers set and found the leading lady missing. His brusque "What is holding you up?," snapped up the relaxing group and Will Rogers, in his nonchalant manner said, "Why, the leadin' lady is over yonder, directin' Sir Charles."

Well, I was given just about five minutes to make up my mind if I wanted to be a leading lady or an animal trainer. I came back to Will Rogers with Sir Charles under my arm, and in tears, and told my story.

"Don't you go to carin', he said "there ain't nobody going to use them animals, no more, but us folks right here, in this company."

Will Rogers wrote in a part for the four little Katzenjammer Kids and Sir Charles, in the next picture, and they were a big hit. When the picture was finished, I was presented with a bill viz., Balled fringe, eaten off of four pair of expensive drapes.... I artificial flower bouquet.... I toupee snatched from sleeping head and eaten.... And that put an end to my animal training career....

On a 4th of July celebration, when Harold Lloyd brought to our home a magnificent display of fireworks, wherein our prized nanny, Mother of the Katzenjammer Kids, eating one of the firecrackers, which failed to go off in the alfalfa field, blew up to twice her normal size, rolled over on her back and died.

This was a terrific blow to Papa since Nanny was his favorite. Papa made it a business to be out in front and next time Harold drove up, in his inimitable style he told Harold the fate of Nanny. Harold, in turn - showing his sweet disposition - gave Papa a pat on the back and told him "I can't tell you how sorry I am - you find another nanny just as good, and I will pay for it, regardless of price."... but that was impossible, for there just couldn't be another nanny.

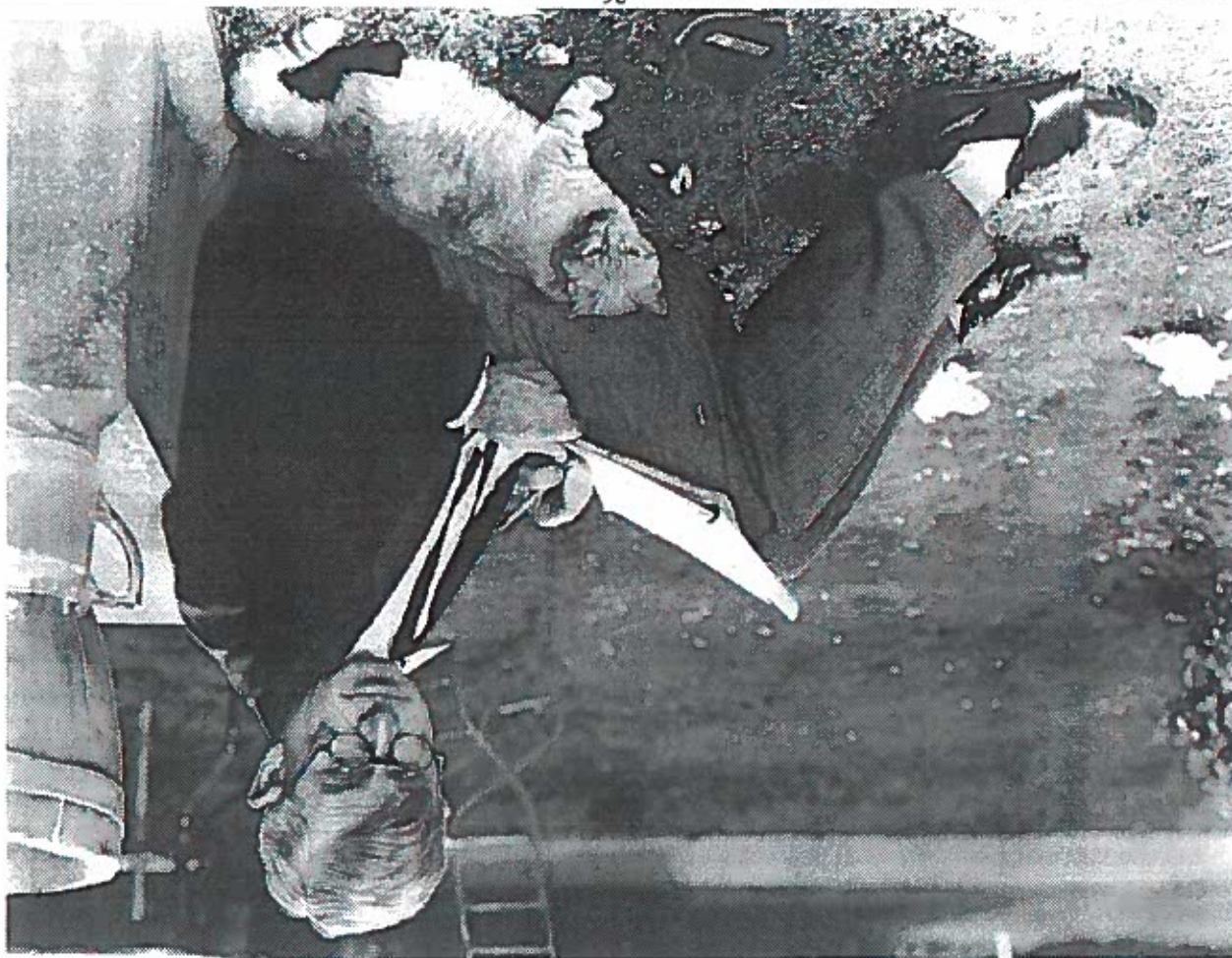
Will Rogers favorite song then was "The Last Round Up." He had a habit of abbreviating words into letters. One morning I was wearing a new sweater I had knit. When W.R. spotted me, he began with a "S.L.S., S.L.S., S.L.S." which I later found out meant "Snorty Looking Sweater."

Like all cowboys, Will Rogers enjoyed looking up a pretty girl. Once when we were on location at a railway station, an extremely attractive girl got off the train, and I heard W.R. mumble, "S.D., S.D., S.D." meaning "Some Dame! Some Dame!" On one occasion Will Rogers was planning a visit to the White House to see President Calvin Coolidge.

Mrs. Rogers made her usual plea, "Now, Will, please promise me one thing. There's only one favor I ask of you while you're on this visit to the White House. When you meet Calvin Coolidge, please address him as Mr. President."

"Why, sure, all right, Ma," Will said. "If that is what you want, I promise."

Later, a telegram was received by Mrs. Rogers which read something like this, "Sorry to disappoint you, Ma, but the



Oh, Lord, make me a partner to the wind and the sun,
Make me as big as the great outdoors,
Never, let it be said I am mean or small
Make me as clean as the wind that blows off the range
As honest as the horse between my knees
As free as the hawk that circles in the breeze,
Help me, Lord, on this long dim trail ahead
Which stretches upward to the Great Divide.

appeared before a group at a Home for the Aged. In the midst of his talk he suddenly disappeared from the stage. He was found in the men's room with his face in a towel, sobbing. The aged, homeless and pitiful group before him were too much for him. The memory of Will Rogers comes to me most vividly when I am out riding on my house along, in the mountains, desert, or valleys, for that country was that he loved. I cannot think of him as being dead, for death means extinction. While fleecy clouds gather in a Sierra blue sky and drift away. Golden showers of aspen and oak leaves eventually disappear. The sea stretches off into limitless space out of sight. Somewhere on this beautiful land that he loved, the vivid, happy, fun loving and giving spirit of Will Rogers lives on. I never hear the sound of galloping hoofs behind me, when riding, that I do not see a picture of W.R. on his horse. Sometimes, I murmur the poem prayer which we sometimes said together, while the wind lashed our faces, dimmed our eyes, and muffled our voices:

As she looked you through with her clear, intelligent eyes, you know instantly why Will Rogers chose her for his life's partner. She was understanding, tolerant, and affectionate, and she needed all her infinite patience, for our lovable Will had a "Peck's Bad Boy" streak in him. He thrived on adventure. Afraid of nothing, he threw caution to the winds. Often times I saw him riding at top speed – backwards in his saddle. It was this reckless daring which I am sure brought about his untimely death. As I watched a pageant in the amphitheatre at Santa Barbara, the announcement of his fatal accident came over the loud speakers. I grew faint for a minute. Somewhere in the far distance, I could hear Mrs. Rogers familiar sweet voice saying, "Now, Will, please. Don't you think it would be best not to..." "Now, Ma, don't you go to worryin' about me. I'll be all right." His head would be down, his hands in his pockets, one foot pawing the ground, and that stubborn, straight, stray lock over his forehead. If only he had listened just this once. But very quickly I recalled some of the words he used in writing the foreword for the book of his beloved friend, the famous cowboy artist, Charles M. Russell, shortly after Mr. Russell's death: "You know the Big Boss Cent sent a hand over and got you so quick, Charley, but I guess he needed a good man pretty bad, I hear they been a-working short handed over there pretty much all the time, and I guess it's hard for him to get hold of good men, they are just getting scarce everywhere." So it was with our Will. God needed a good man pretty bad. His fine feeling and sensitive heart were ever obvious, particularly in his generosity among the poor. One time he

Ben Turpin The Later Years

Before completing ten two-reel comedies for the Weiss Brothers-Artclass contract, production on the films were now and again interrupted by Ben's personal appearance tours throughout America. And about this time the new novelty of "talkies" were soon the rage. It was the end of silents. In 1929 while appearing at the Orpheum Theater in New Orleans, Turpin told writer K.T. Knoblock, "You gotta land on your spine if you want to get a laugh. Talking ain't going to mean much in comedies, they're mostly running around and falling down." A year later while on yet another tour and coincidentally back again in his hometown of New Orleans, Ben told the Times-Picayune, "People got more action for their money," in reference to silent pictures. "The pictures were funnier. Nowadays we just say what they tell us to say and do what they tell us to do. There was more real acting in silent pictures. But the silent pictures are done." There was a solemn expression on the face of the little man who has occupied the spotlight in screenland for more than twenty years, as he spoke these words. The tone of his voice bespoke regret. But Ben Turpin has by no means given up. He is an actor. Acting is his profession, and he plans to go on doing his best to provide laughs for the public. Asked if after 21 years he had not tired of the movies, he promptly replied: "Never."

"The trouble with this world is a lack of good, deep laughs and the trouble with the motion picture industry today is that the producers, in the mad scramble to grind out pictures that sing and dance and



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which, after all, are nothing but canned musicals or melodrama, have forgotten all about the good, old-fashioned comedies. "Don't get me wrong - I'm not crying for work. I didn't drag down my \$3,000 a week for three years for nothing. I've got mine and plenty of it. But what is going to happen to this old world if the comedies are forgotten? All the wise-cracking writers and alleged humorists in the world never caused half the laughs that resulted from the antics of the slapstick comedians on the screen. Now they are forgetting all about us."

Ben Turpin "retired" in the early days of the talkies, reputedly worth a fortune, and invested his movie earnings in real estate at a time when more people were investing in the stock market. Ben always had the last laugh. From then on he took only occasional talking parts, always demanding \$1000 a week for his services. If a producer thought it was too much to pay, Ben's answer was that he didn't have to work - "take it or leave it," or "Well, I guess I'll go and collect some rents."

He told Harry T. Brundidge in 1929: "I get up every morning at 5 o'clock, exercise the dogs, take a two-mile walk, look after the cars and then eat breakfast. If you want to be happy and healthy, don't worry, and take a lot of good, deep laughs every day. I'd be the same Ben Turpin if I lost every dime I own - but I won't.

"You ought to see that nice house out in Beverly Hills. And my Great Dane dogs. And Mrs. Turpin.

"Come down to the bank and take a look at the money I've made with these eyes. Then write your own answer."



The Show of Shows, Turpin, Helene Conklin, Lupino Lane, Lee Moran, Bert Roach and Lloyd Hamilton. Left, a 1929 ad for one of Turpin's personal appearances in Chicago. Courtesy Mark Johnson



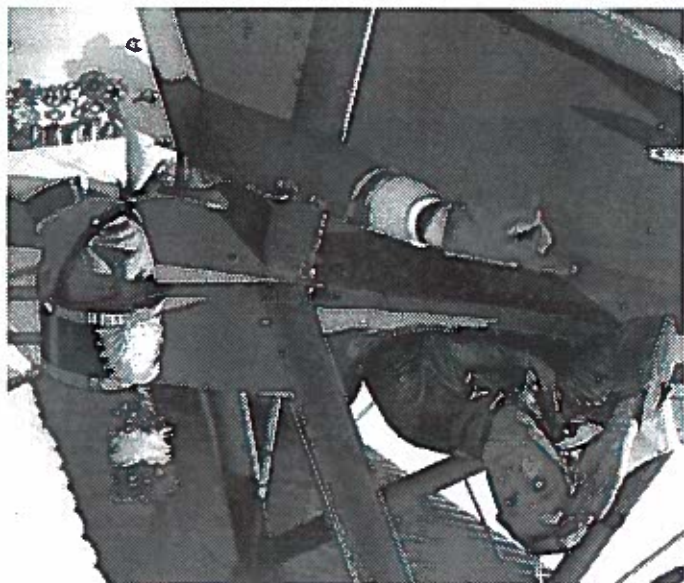
the people responsible for the production including Stepin Fetchak, Chester Conklin, Nick Stuart, Daphne Pollard, Bryant Washburn, Little Billy, and Ben Turpin.

Turpin's first talkie was a small, quick walk-on in Ernst Lubitsch's extravagant twelve reel feature The Love Parade for Paramount with Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald. Nearly all Turpin's film appearances over the next ten years were quickies like this.

The next made a surprise appearance in the star-studded fifteen reel Warner Brothers-Viaphone feature, The Show of Shows, along with other comedy legends, Lloyd Hamilton, Bert Roach, Lee Moran and Heinie Conklin in a little skit built around the tune Floradora. Ben played a waiter #108 (appropriately enough!), sang one of six verses from the song and finished with a nice hard 108. This was followed with a role as a bartender at the wedding reception sequence in the Pathe feature Swing High (1930), which also included old friends Chester Conklin and Daphne Pollard. Later that year Ben was "the greatest cock-eyed radio announcer in the world," in the eighth episode of Station S-T-A-R's The Voice of Hollywood, a series of entertaining little one reel oddities from Tec-Art Studio. This particular episode also featured Madge Bellamy, Myrna Loy, Mickey Rooney, and old friends Alberta Vaughn and Al Cooke, and included Ben's favorite "eye" jokes such as: "I'm so cockeyed that when I was a young fellow I spent five years in the southeast trying to join the Northwest Mounted Police." In Cracked Nuts, an early Wheeler and Woolsey feature for RKO and directed by Turpin's old associate Eddie Cline, Ben is an enemy bombardier ordered to drop destruction on a mythical country.

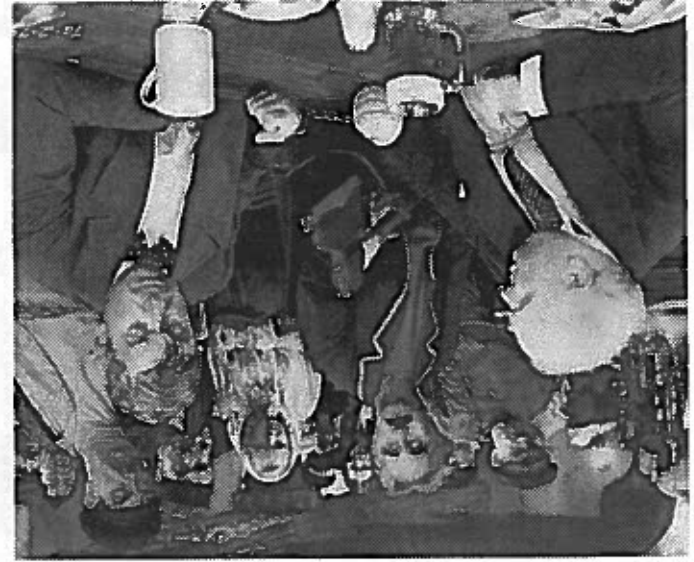


Publicity pose from The Film Parade, with stars including Lionel Belmore, Paul Panzer, Bryant Washburn, Anita Stewart, J. Stuart Blackton, (scaled) Kate Price, Bud Duncan, Flora Finch and Turpin.



Ben taking orders from Stanley Fields in Cracked Nuts

Ben next pops up toward the end of Laurel and Hardy's two-reeler Our Wife. Film Daily wrote, "The Laurel and Hardy combination put on some hilarious pranks for the benefit of this Hal Roach subject, which is a pip. Oliver undergoes a lot of grief in eloping with his fat sweetie principally through the shapeliness of his pal. Finally they reach the home of the justice of the peace, played by Ben Turpin, and that cross-eyed individual marries the femme to the wrong man. Entertainment deluxe for any audience." On April 25, 1931, when he was sixty-one years old, Ben underwent a major operation for an intestinal ailment. After a few days recovery he was released and soon back to work. Turpin does a cameo in Sennett's Educational short, Movie-Town which is obviously more of a candid appearance as Ben and his dancing partner, wife Babette, just whiz past the camera to the music of George Olsen and His Orchestra. At the very end of his good friend Will Rogers' feature film Ambassador Bill, Turpin shows up with large ax in hand and severs the handcuffs from Will setting him free. In the spring of 1932 Turpin was back working for Mack Sennett to knock off a small part in Lighthouse Love which featured Arthur



Top: Scene from Ambassador Bill with Turpin and Will Rogers. Make Me A Star herald advertisement; Our Wife with Babe London, Oliver Hardy, Blanche Payson, Turpin, and Stan Laurel. Top right, Turpin as Henry, the cross-eyed goony in Law of the Wild.

Stone, Dorothy Granger, Franklin Pangborn and old friends and associates Mack Swain, Tom Kennedy, and Barney Hellum. Next back at Paramount, Ben received top billing just behind Joan



Blondell, Stuart Erwin and Zasu Pitts appearing as himself in Make Me A Star, a tedious remake of Merton of the Movies. Although his role was actually small, Ben played the fictional film company's slapstick comedian, an actor whose lowbrow histrionic style budding-actor Stu Erwin supposedly despises. The film also featured a number of stars including silent comedy veterans Bobby Vernon, Bud Jamison, Snub Pollard, Victor Fotel and Eddie Baker. Following that, Ben returned as a mysterious silent spy in the W.C. Fields/Jack Oakie feature, Million Dollar Legs, directed by friend Eddie Cline.

Turpin makes a surprise appearance in an episode of Paramount's short novelty, Hollywood on Parade, which contains a rare and early glimpse of Ben serving beers to none other than Ted Healy and His Stooges, Moe, Larry and Curly, as well as serving drinks to old friend Polly Moran, Chic Sale, and songwriters Mack Gordon and Harry Revel before taking a smacking 108.

1933 seems to have been a quiet year, motion picture-wise, for Turpin. The inactivity seems to have bothered him. In 1934 when he wasn't finding much work in the movies, he told one reporter, "(I'm) tired of having nothing to do, and they don't call me to act anymore. I'm better fixed than most stars who were at the top when I was, twelve years ago. I'd be terrific as a gate-keeper. Imagine - the only guy in the business who could see 'em going and coming! We're all alike in our feelings when the casting director doesn't ring." Possibly as a result of the interview, the phone was ringing. In 1935, Vitaphone released a two-reel classic, Keystone Hotel. The film's director, Ralph Staub, told Leonard Malin, "The picture, including all the chases, was made in seven days. I personally knew Ford Sterling, Ben Turpin, Chester Conklin, and others appearing in the film. I sold them on starting a new slapstick series. Jack Warner would only permit me to contract with the players for one picture. After the preview at Warner's Hollywood theater, Warner said 'sign them for a series,' but this was not possible. Their agents were there at the preview and when I approached them, they wanted triple the salary they received in Keystone Hotel. Jack Warner would not go for the hike in salary (I couldn't blame him)."



Above: Warren Williams clowns with Ben between scenes of Keystone Hotel. Right top: With the Tick-Tock Girls from Star Lite Days at the Lido. Right center: With William Tracy in Cinema Circus. Right bottom, enjoying life offscreen at the circus with a couple of clown pals.

According to a rare article dated June 8th from the World Telegram, Keystone Cops Coming Back With Old Gags and New Pies, "(Ben) Turpin, his hair now gray, but with the same roving eyes, again is the visiting celebrity, who's always in trouble. Ford Sterling had just accused Ben of being an old man. And Ben, now 66, was doing double flips and backward somersaults to prove that years don't mean a thing - Chester Conklin acting as a one-man roofing section for him.

Turpin, on the receiving side (of several prop pies), seemed to get a great many more than his share. He was almost buried in crust and fruit juice and marshmallow, and it was impossible to tell whether he liked it or not.

Another quickie, Ben popped up in Sterling Holloway's Van Ronkel comedy for Universal, Bring 'em Back a Lie, a parody of the popular Frank Buck adventures.

Surely Turpin's most extended portrayal during his free-lance career was in the Mascot western serial, Law of the Wild, playing Henry the hired hand in a series of twelve two-reel chapters. It starred Bob Custer, Lucille Brown, Rex, the King of Wild Horses, and Rin Tin Tin, Jr. Production began in late June 1934 and Ben was paid \$100 a day for his services. Again, Turpin had little to do in the film but his name helped to sell tickets at the box office.

Ben next made a surprise appearance in the Louis Lewyn MGM Technicolor one reel short, Startit Days at the Lido, an all star musical featuring "a galaxy of stars," among them Arthur Lake, Sally Eilers, Buster Crabbe, Johnny Mack Brown, Baby LeRoy, Cliff "Ukelele Ike" Edwards, and others. Three homely girls known as "The Tick-Tock Girls" are singing about wanting a real man when out of a beach tent Turpin, in beautiful rich color, suddenly emerges sporting a lifeguards bathing suit to which the girls go wild over him. He does a 108 slamming the boardwalk below him and the girls seize the opportunity to smother Ben with tickles, hugs and kisses.

Turpin next turned up in the Educational-Fox Frolics of Youth short, The Little Big Top, which also featured Poodles Hannaford and

The Great Movie Shorts by Leonard Maltin, Bonanza Books New York, 1972. Page 25





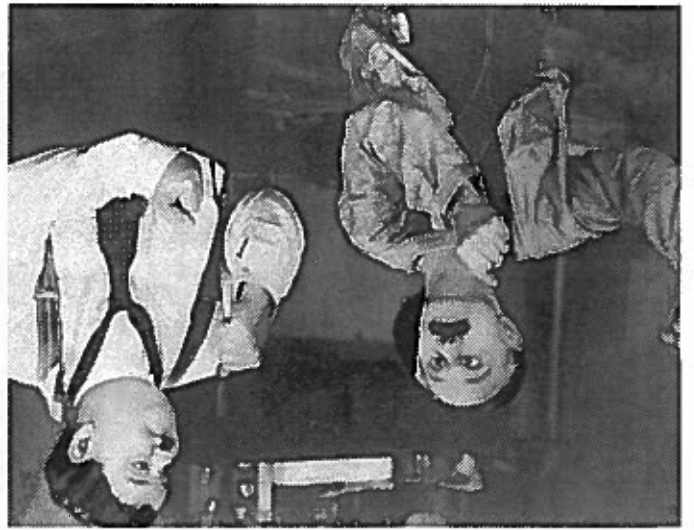
With old friend Chester Conklin, Hollywood Cavalcade

Family, and Junior Coghlan. Ben plays a champion archer who's come to do his William Tell act but is in need of a volunteer to hold an apple atop his head. After seeing Ben's eyes, off course everyone is reluctant to help. But Tommy Kelly is elected and has nothing to fear as long as Ben has his glasses. Unfortunately the glasses break and Ben's in a panic but the show must go on, Ben insisting he can shoot by instinct. After shooting a few arrows astray to the amusement of the audience, Turpin finally hits the target and gets a big round of applause. The short was later absorbed in a low-budget feature known as *Circus Days*.

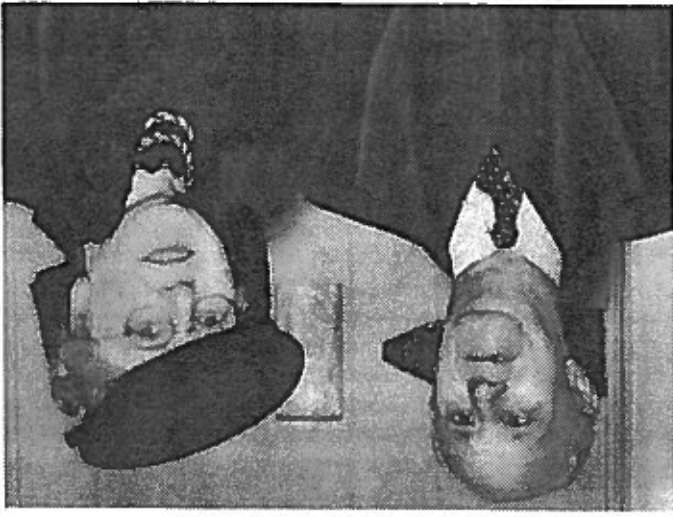
A short time later Ben was back again in full Technicolor with old friends Charlie Murray, Chester Conklin and Hank Mann in the one-reeler *Cinema Circus*, and shared singing verses of *The Man on the Flying Trapeze*. The film also featured appearances by Olsen and Johnson, the Ritz Brothers, Boris Karloff, Mickey Rooney, William S. Hart and others.

Despite the fact that Ben was known to have saved and invested his money, a report cropped up in the late '30's that he was broke. Either coincidentally, or just to "show 'em," Turpin promptly bought two business buildings for \$50,000 cash at a time in this country when money was hard to come by.

In 1939, 20th Century recreated life in the silent era with Hollywood Cavalcade and brought back the age how movies used to be made. Ben Turpin and old friends such as Buster Keaton, Chester Conklin, Dave Morris, Jack Cooper, Victor Potel, Irving Bacon and others



Turpin's last film appearance, Saps at Sea, with Oliver Hardy



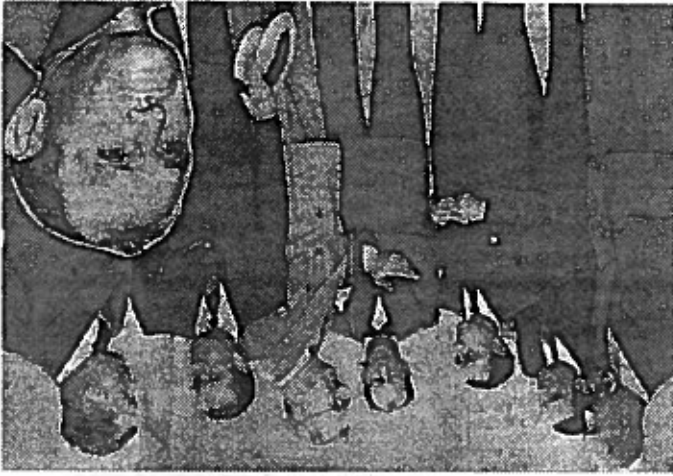
One of the last photos taken of Ben, shown with wife Bette, in 1940

supported Alice Faye and Don Ameche in this feature. Ben's appearance was relatively minor, merely a walk-on, in this well done feature.

In 1940 he was working again with old friends Laurel and Hardy in their feature *Saps at Sea*, where he played an apartment building handy man in Stan and Ollie's complex who is adept at crossing wires and pipes so that everything, electrical and mechanical, was all mixed up. When Ollie called to complain, Ben, in his old and weakening voice, told Ollie, naturally, "It looks all right to me!"

Soon after the release of *Saps at Sea*, according to newspaper accounts, Turpin had recently been suffering from asthma and a heart ailment for several weeks, then, on or about June 21st, 1940 he had a stroke which paralyzed half of his body. Two days later on June 23rd, he was released from the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. Ben was permitted to return to his home at 602 North Canon Drive on that day and it was thought that his recovery was assured. On Sunday June 31st, however, he suffered a relapse and his physician, Dr. Rudolph Marx, ordered he be taken to Santa Monica Hospital at once. All day Sunday, according to Bette, Ben said he felt fine and he was in the best of spirits. Later that day he had a severe attack. Bette was summoned from their home. He died at 1:50am in the early hours of July 1st. He would have been 71 years old within the next 3 months.

Masses of floral tributes banked the casket in the dimly-lit, fragrant



At Ben Turpin's funeral, former associates Joe Murphy, Victor Potel, Buster Keaton, Hank Mann, Charlie Murray, Snub Pollard and Billy Bevan, Insel, Hubert Dillz, Turpin stand-in and stuntman

precincts of the Church of the Good Shepard in Beverly Hills on July 3rd where requiem high mass was said.

In a brief sermon Father J.R. Conannon praised the actor as a "fine member of his church, strong in his faith."

Pallbearers included Turpin's former Mack Sennett associates Charlie Murray, Andy Clyde, Jimmy Finlayson, Billy Bevan, Del Lord and John A. Waldron. Honorary pallbearers were Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, Otto Kirscher, Theodore Van de Kamp, Lawrence Frank, H.A. Dunn, Carl Blank, Charles Scrubie, George Campbell, M.D. Sales, Fred L. Cook, O.R. Maddux, Sid Grauman and Paul Guerin.

Chaplin, whom brought Turpin out to California from Chicago in early 1915, sent a seven-foot tall wreath of red roses, sweet peas and Easter lillies. Familiar names at the service included Dot Farley, Joe Murphy, Louise Carver, Ruth Renick, Raymond Griffith, Billy Franey, Hank Mann, Buster Keaton, Victor Potel, Vernon Dent, Snub Pollard, Al St. John, Tiny Ward, Eddie Quilian, and early Essanay-Chicago studio manager, Verna Day. At the request of his widow, Babette, interment on the main floor in the Azalea Corridor of Forest Lawn, Glendale, was private.

Afterward -

As mentioned in our first chapter, Ben's mother Sarah (Buckley) Turpin had passed away when he was still very young. His father Ernest (aka Edward) Turpin had eventually sold his candy business in New York and returned to New Orleans in 1891 where he enjoyed his retirement until his death on January 30th, 1899 at the age of 64.* Thanks to the diligence of researcher Bryan Tulin, Ben's uncle Eugene Turpin, Ben's father's younger brother, was born in (as was Ernest) Mexico, circa 1837. Years later as located in the 1880 census records of Louisiana, Eugene is listed being age 44, single, and



*Obits at the time suggest his age at time of death being 65 and/or 66, but earlier census records suggest Ernest was born c1831/35 setting his age at time of death at 63 or 64

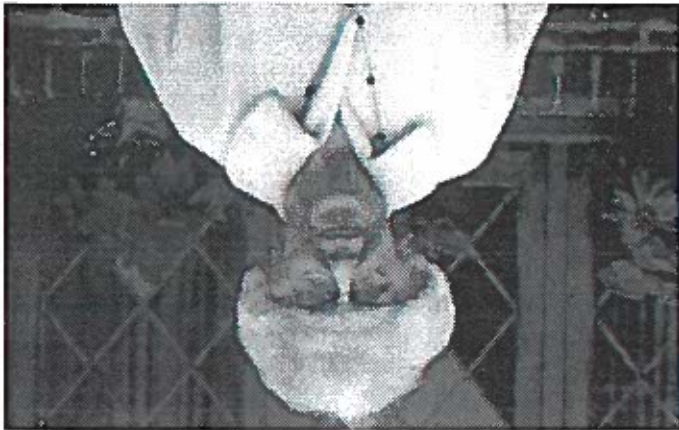
working as a cook in St. Bernard, LA. Tulin tells us that he did not locate Eugene in the census of 1920 and therefore suspects he may well have died by then.

Ben's uncle Charles Turpin had become a successful doctor in New Orleans and had a lot to do with the charity hospital in that city. Charles married in the early 1850's and built he and his wife a large family of at least eight children within the first twenty years of their marriage. At least one of these children, Edwige, remained a close cousin to Ben over the years.

Ben's younger sister Octavia was found among the pages of the 1900 New York Census, she at that time a patient in the Buffalo State Hospital. At the time of this writing, I have unfortunately not yet uncovered anything additional on Octavia.

Ben's older sister Ernestine, named after her father, whom was born October 27, 1867 in New Orleans, married a fellow named Knies around 1890 and in 1893 they had a son they named Julian whom was working as a "credit man" in a bank in 1920. That same year, according to census reports, Ernestine was by then widowed and living with her son in East Orange, New Jersey. Ernestine attended Ben and Babette's wedding in 1926 but she may well had not gotten along with her brother's wife over the years as upon Ben's death soon a nasty court battle over his will between his sister and widow was in the works. I hope to offer this story in a future issue of Slapstick! However, Ernestine lived to the ripe old age of 101 until her death in Los Angeles in May 1969.

Ben's second wife Babette survived her husband's death and never remarried. She died in Beverly Hills on May 18th, 1969.



Mrs. Ben Turpin (Babette E. Dietz) in later years, outside her home in California and (below) paying her respects at the grave of her husband.

their early solo work in 1924 up to the present age of DVD releases.

This is, among other things, the story of the unparalleled popularity of the team Laurel & Hardy in Germany from 1927 onwards. The slapstick comedians had already won the nation's affection in the days of the Weimar Republic, and their films continued to be shown under the Nazi regime until a 1938 trade ban prohibited the German import of US films. Almost from the beginning, Laurel and Hardy were known to the Germans as Dick und Doof (albeit spelled Doi in those days), which loosely translates as Fat and Dumb. Unaffectionate as that may sound, these names – which Germans still popularly apply to the comedians today – did not in any way diminish the high audience regard for Laurel & Hardy.

Even before film classification and 'self control' boards took up their work in post-war Germany, the team was back on the silver screen in the Western occupation zones during 1949. Right from the end of WWII, numerous short-lived film distribution companies milked cash from the teams' ever-popular films. Throughout the following decades, their films – silent and sound shorts, and feature-length films – were submitted over and over again for classification by the German Film Board FSK, or 'Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle' ('Voluntary Self-Control'), a film industry board which anticipated as much as it prevented federal film censorship.

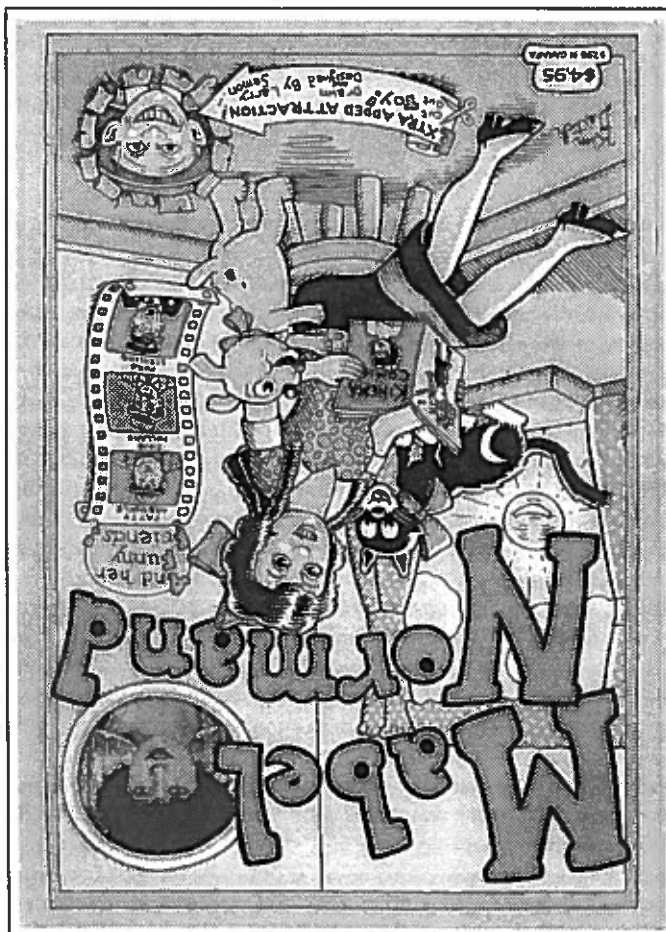
While the German-language adaptations had been popular for decades, it was only in the 1960s that German film critics and historians started once more to praise Laurel and Hardy's artistic merits, as they had in pre-war times. Most of the credit belongs to film distributor Atlas who, following their popular re-issue of Buster Keaton's THE GENERAL, re-dubbed and re-released a number of the teams' films in new editions, even refusing to use the popular 'Dick und Doof' label in their marketing. Further, Atlas managed to secure for these films an official seal of artistic distinction ('wertvoll,' meaning 'valuable'), one important consequence of which was a tax reduction for the films' distribution, with the result of even wider exposure.

In addition to giving a behind-the-scenes story of the dubbing industry from 1934 onwards, the author fills in an unknown piece of television history by tracing how, since 1961, millions of German TV viewers have become familiar with classic slapstick comedies through the activities of Atlas collaborator Werner Schwieler, and later Roach Library head Heinz Caloue.

In addition to his unprecedented research into the German dubbing industry, Norbert Apling has also double-checked the history of Laurel & Hardy's elusive phonetic German-language films, those in which the comedians spoke their own German dialogue rather than being dubbed. Several were produced in this way (alongside versions in English, French, Italian and Spanish) and Apling has researched the history of these long-forgotten editions, from their original distribution to the recent, chance discovery of the only surviving German-language example, a two-minute fragment supplied with a toy projector in Denmark. Meticulously checking and correcting previously unsubstantiated filmographic entries against contemporary trade papers, verifying which films were indeed shot in German (as opposed to dubbed or subtitled), Apling has thus also made a significant contribution to the Laurel & Hardy 'phonetic' filmography.

While this chronicle of local release history will evoke quite a bit of nostalgia for a German readership, international Sons of the Desert may be interested to learn that the book will be lavishly illustrated using memorabilia from all periods of German distribution. This will include rare posters, trade ads and lobby cards, and materials offering further proof of the existence of an official Laurel and Hardy fan club that predates the SONS by more than twenty years. Most of these documents have not been published since their original appearance, decades ago. International readers will also appreciate the availability of an English-

language condensation (approximately 25 pages) guiding them through the 500-page book. Furthermore, Apling will map the chaos of German Laurel and Hardy adaptations in all conceivable distribution media (from theatrical prints to TV, videotapes, and the different video discs leading up to today's DVD format), by means of a 300-page supplemental filmography. Both documents will be made available to owners of the book in digital format, either on CD-ROM or via the internet. The retail price of the hardcover book (excluding S&H) will be 29,90 Euros.



MABEL NORMAND AND HER FUNNY FRIENDS is the first of a great collection of comics assembled by Marilyn Slater, taken from the funny pages of popular early periodical "The Kinema Comic." In addition to Mabel, also featured are Snub Pollard, Ford Sterling and Fatty Arbuckle, as well as a rare full-color back cover by Larry Semon from 1909. The cartoons are well reproduced and wrapped within a great full-color cover by legendary artist Kim Dietrich. Copies are available for \$4.95 plus \$1.00 postage and handling from: FantaGraphic Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115. For information contact Marilyn at: a616812@hotmail.com

Another great new release for the new year is KEYSTONE: THE LIFE AND CLOWNS OF MACK SENNETT by Simon Louvish. From the books Prologue: The tale of Mack Sennett is the tale of a Hollywood legend, a man who had risen from the lowest ranks to become the master of the largest movie studio in Los Angeles, employer of hundreds of actors, film directors, camera and soundmen, crew and staff, inventor of the most popular comedy brand in the world, producer, director, writer and, in the early days, actor in his own productions, possessor of a personal fortune claimed to be as high as fifteen million dollars in the mid-1920's. As Mack wrote in his own house journal, the Mack Sennett Weekly, in April 1917: "There is no form of American industry which experiences such rapid

